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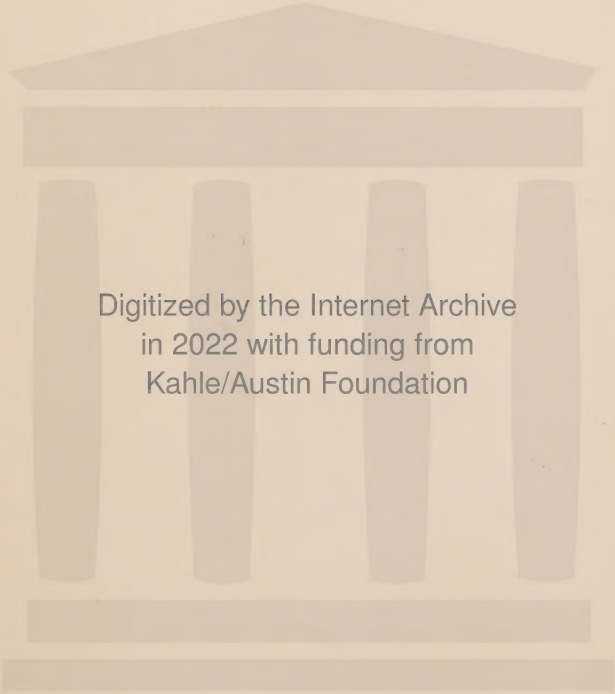
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INDIAN
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CONQUERING OUR GREAT AMERICAN PLAINS

A Historical Development

by

STUART HENRY

AUTHOR OF

"THE NETS" (LONDON), "VILLA ELSA," "FRENCH ESSAYS AND PROFILES," "HOURS WITH FAMOUS PARISIANS," ETC.

Illustrated

NEW YORK

E. P. DUTTON & CO., INC.

978

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IN AFFECTIONATE TRIBUTE TO MY

NEPHEW AND NIECE

THOMAS AND MARGARET WATSON PERRY

10779

PREFACE

It fell to my youthful lot to live at the time when, and in the central and original spot where, the historical events described in the following pages took place. As years pass and men die, more reliance, more value, appear to be placed by historians on eye-witnesses as compared with individuals not present or not yet born. Accounts by absent persons, who have usually no training about history nor, indeed, an adequate use of their own language, and who rely on loose statements or hearsay, need to be backed up by sufficient evidence before being accepted in preference to testimony of reliable persons who were on the ground.

During practically the entire historic period in Abilene, Kansas, on our Great Plains, important among the periods in the origins of our American development, only perhaps a score of men lived in that village. Those pioneers have nearly all joined the majestic silent majority. Of the living, I alone have any habit of authorship.

The public is disposed to forget that education in the 1860's was on a lower and less expanded level in our United States than to-day. What may be termed illiteracy or very rudimentary instruction earmarked the first or wagon pioneers out West, owing chiefly to lack

of good early advantages. Expression by them in correct or undefiled English was rare; their habit of reading books rarer; their acquaintance with published histories almost unknown.

So, early frontier accounts are frequently obscure or inconsistent. For it is not enough to see a thing. Regrettable is it if one does not lucidly and logically set forth noteworthy observations for those who come after. It would be better, too, if he has a little general knowledge of life and events elsewhere—an equipment such as a fair instruction indicates—so that his views may offer a comparative and proportioned or balanced worth. The actual situation renders difficult at times the questions of intelligent accuracy about early days.

It is essential, moreover, for the reader to realize distinctly what the conditions and accepted opinions then and there were, and not insert among them, as frequently occurs, conditions, experiences and opinions of later times or known of in other places. He should understand that that frontier region of the American Desert represented almost a *tabula rasa* where almost anything might be expected by newcomers to happen. He will not rightly appreciate, otherwise, the radical and well-nigh boundless changes that have come to pass.

My brother, T. C. Henry, older by nineteen years, arrived in Abilene in the fall of 1867. The rest of our family, including of course myself, followed from New York State in March, 1868, when I was seven and a half years of age. Ours had been a well-to-do farmer's

family there, but suffered the loss of nearly all its modest fortune by raising cotton in Alabama right after the Civil War. My father having died, T. C., as soon called in the familiar ways of the Kansas border, found himself, when twenty-six, at the head of our little household. He was blessed with a good "seminary" education and energy—two qualifications then lacking in that native hamlet in the center of a vast, virgin domain considered virtually worthless and hopeless, where, as a result, such human endowments seemed of small use.

Being the only child in our group, all the anxieties, fears, hardships and successes, prospects, troubles and failures, which threatened or enlivened or blighted the community, furnished daily talk before me. It was, in fact, idle to keep much back from me, for I had only to step out of our yard to see and know life "in the raw." My brother, for that matter, treated me considerably as if an equal and often confided to me his plans, ambitions, hopes, experiences, disappointments, despairs. Though merely an average boy, it was natural that I became possessed of a more mature understanding of existence, good and bad, than lads ordinarily show.

No historian, not even any well-known writer of frontier thrillers, has, I think, ever been in Abilene to inform himself thoroughly of its early career. Friends for years urged me to write its story and its story of our Great Plains, as there was no other eye-witness and author for the task. The topic has remained little known to standard historical record, though vital for the com-

prehension of our entire national growth. It seemed, in truth, neglectful and a pity that this historical subject should drop out of sight, likely for all time.

About the hard and often frightening days at Abilene in the late 60's and early 70's my recollections are vivid. Yet one's memory is apt to be treacherous and, instead of the easy, enjoyable plan of writing this account out of my mind, I have taken the more troublesome, exacting course of attempting to verify my knowledge and understanding of the facts by the testimony of other eye-witnesses or men in position to know the truth, and also by certain official documents.

As to that Abilene history, which then soon became notorious in the nation, I am fortunately able to quote not only from Charles F. Gross in confirmation of my recital but to furnish like evidence from J. B. Edwards of Abilene. Gross, as a mature man of some twenty-five years, lived there during its whole historic Texas cattle period from 1867 on. In his official capacity he came in daily contact with the Texans and civilians. No man knew the village and its life better than he.

Edwards, when twenty-six years old, settled there in 1870. He is the only person who resided on the spot during a part of the period in question and who made a hobby for years of collecting data respecting it. His collection he very kindly turned over to me for consultation and for the substantiation of our common agreed-on knowledge and ideas, and has communicated with me liberally about them. His experiences, riper than my

youthful ones, have been most valuable. His assistance in defending both the correct history of our important town, as it was then, and the good name of its first inhabitants, is heartily acknowledged.

The chief object of the present volume is to try to state facts, to draw from them proper conclusions and pictures, concerning the frontier village of Abilene with its famous Texas Cattle Trade, and to describe the circumstances attending what proved to be the solution in the year 1871 as to the future of our Great Plains. My endeavor also is, as best I can, to bring out rightly the characters and reputations of certain Western pioneers who have been degraded and, in consequence, are now supposed in some quarters to have been disreputable in a village spectacular, dangerous and at that time unique in our history or, so far as I know, in any history.

It may be well to mention what the latter years were of Joseph G. McCoy and Theodore C. Henry—those two pioneer magnates or upbuilders on the Plains who figure in the within pages.

McCoy, after his Abilene days, remained connected mainly in the cattle business, residing finally in Wichita, Kansas, where he died in 1915.

Henry (continuing to be called T. C.), known as the Kansas Wheat King for his winter wheat propaganda and his extensive farming operations, covering thousands of acres, became State Senator in Kansas, President of its State Fair Association and the leading Republican candidate for Governor against St. John in 1882.

Retaining his farming and financial interests in Kansas he moved to Denver in 1883 to be co-owner and manager of the Denver Circle Railway enterprises. He established the Colorado Loan and Trust Company and was called Irrigation King of Colorado. He constructed several large irrigation systems with hundreds of miles or irrigating canals, opening up to agriculture the Grand River valley, the Uncompahgre valley, the immense San Luis valley, the lower Arkansas River valley in Colorado (east of Fowler), and he conducted smaller irrigation companies in the South Platte River valley and numerous other districts. In connection therewith he carried on farming on about twenty-three thousand acres. In the latter 1880's he and two other men were appointed a committee by the Colorado Legislature to formulate for the first time a complete and consistent code of irrigation laws, which code went into effect. A part of the appropriation for this committee was returned unused to the Legislature, an unheard-of proceeding up to that time in Colorado. Henry died in Denver in 1914 and his body lay in state in the State Capitol.

Century Club, New York.

STUART HENRY.

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CONQUERING OUR GREAT AMERICAN PLAINS

CHAPTER I

THE PLAINS

About forty years ago, or the year 1890, I happened to be riding in a buggy in the eastern central part of the former Great American Plains. It was summer time and wheat fields shone with their yellow glory. In my musings my notice became attracted to a short narrow strip of ground rank with coarsest weeds. What could that be, so different from the well-tilled surroundings? At last, it came over me. A patch of the old Trail! Could it be possible after all the years that this lone patch had escaped the plow? But there it was, still defying Time.

In an instant a whirlwind of memories of my youth swept across my brain. Reminiscences, almost dizzying. Reminiscences of things so tender and things so scary. The forgotten, disquieting, Chisholm Trail, which had so acutely haunted me in my boyhood! And all around and about the golden wheat! Winter wheat, by contrast, had filled my adolescence with dreams of riches and splendors. The Trail and the Wheat! The conflict between a Trail and Winter Wheat! Their story sprang up in my mind as I drove along, only to pass from my consciousness when the scene changed.

And not until now, after sixty years, has it come about that I am writing of it.

This narrative relates distinctively to a theatrical, epochal development and to an humble yet epochal event, both identified with Abilene, Kansas, and the Great American Desert in the period from 1867-8 to 1872. They originated and led to the advancement, into its present condition, of that empire lying mainly between the longitude of the Missouri River and that of the Rocky Mountains or, we may say, Denver. Men often styled it not only American Desert or Great American Desert but frequently the Great Plains or the Plains. The confines of this arid, alluvial expanse were not generally known. The Plains consisted of prairies of a different nature from those east of the Mississippi. While the prairies here, in Illinois, lay comparatively flat, monotonous, those west of the Missouri, though called the Plains, lay rolling, rollicking.

In the center you find the State of Kansas, admitted to the Union in 1861. On the north appeared Nebraska and the Dakotas; on the south appeared the Indian Territory, now Oklahoma. There should be included the eastern four-tenths of Colorado and the eastern fourth of Montana.[1] The total size of all this realm is about

[1] For reasons of convenience in connection with our subject, we are offsetting the Wyoming Plains by the Black Hills district of South Dakota, and omitting Texas and the eastern section of New Mexico. Nearly all of this domain in the last two States, though, belonged climatically and truly to the semi-arid region designated as the Plains. If this domain were added to our figures above, the proportions we have suggested would be increased by almost one-half, becoming all the more momentous.

four hundred and fifty thousand square miles, or about fifteen per cent of the area of the continental United States. That realm is six and three-fourths times larger than New England, whose population in 1927, however, was roughly one-tenth more than the seven and a third million inhabitants of the former Great Plains. This area of the Plains is more extensive than that of Great Britain, France and Italy combined, or more than that of England, France and Germany together. Its population greatly exceeds, for instance, that of Bulgaria or Ireland, Scotland, Portugal, Switzerland, Sweden, Norway or Greece. It was not surpassed by the United States itself until about 1810.

This Desert as a whole, west of nearly the parallel of Topeka, remained practically unoccupied in 1867 by white men as settlers. The population of Kansas then numbered about two hundred and sixty thousand. Not long before this time the part of the Plains next west of the general line of the Missouri River had been largely divided up between Indian tribes and set off to them under Indian Districts, Reservations, Reserves, Cessions and Trust Lands. But these temporary arrangements became presently disposed of by moving these Indians south to the Indian Territory or elsewhere.

Though much pacified, the Plains in its entirety may well have been called, still in 1867, a howling wilderness overrun by wild savages and by likewise destructive herds of bison; and it could be also identified by racing antelope, gray wolves, coyotes, rattlesnakes, prairie

dogs, uninspiring cottonwood trees, buffalo grass. Two railway lines, forts and a few other footholds by white men could be cited, and, too, the Santa Fé and Oregon Trails, both stretching across, and along which paths armed groups or convoys hastened for their lives en route to the more distant West. Of stationary population and tranquil peace there was, therefore, little.

The Plains, in a restricted and more familiar sense, signified Kansas and Nebraska. Of Kansas, the heart of it, being the particular part we are concerned with in the above period, it should be said that seven-eighths lay west of the line of Topeka and went vaguely by the name of "Western Kansas." The word Kansas, according to the Secretary of the Kansas State Historical Society, "means 'People of the South Wind' for one thing. It has other meanings and applications connected with wind. It is one of the oldest words in the language of the Siouan Linguistic family of North American Indians. It was a word used much in their ceremonies and there were Kansas clans in the various tribes of the Siouan people."

This wind name, it seems, was recognized even by the Indians as true of the windy climate of the Great Plains —a feature causing much annoyance and distress to the later white inhabitants. Popular authors of the 1860's, like A. D. Richardson in "Beyond the Mississippi" when writing of Kansas as of 1866, extolled the State as a land sweet with prosperity and happiness. This was strikingly inaccurate. To its narrow eastern border did they really mean to refer. The remainder suggested a

mere interrogation mark furnishing no basis for milk-and-honey exclamations.

The frontier wiseacres, trappers, Indian scouts and squatters vociferously dubbed "Western Kansas" as a "no good" country. Yet the State stood as the central commonwealth of the nation, with mildly rolling, grassy prairies diversified by small hills, and of such admirable drainage as to result in no lakes nor swamps of any size. Unsuspected was it of concealing mineral or other underground property. Such wealth presumably belonged to mountainous districts.

The fact that one had penetrated only into the eastern section of the Plains carried no special significance. All became classed alike. Incontestably it showed itself to be a more or less parched level. Any agricultural assurance of its rich, light-brown soil, a silty loam, was negatived by a sky not only considered well-nigh tearless but too often heartless. In addition to the buffalo grass, the few stunted trees and bushes along the streams provided the sign of a desert to every eye that saw. It would be impossible to make a tree grow more than "so high." The fuel consisted mainly of buffalo "chips" (dried dung). Due to lack of arboreous growths, there were no squirrels, their place being taken by burrowing rodents here called prairie dogs. Their towns represented in this part of America the only settled, orderly and busy communities where social peace and socialistic activities reigned.

Little wonder the colossal sweep of this American

Desert was called "no good." Its slow emergence into history and enlightenment offered another proof of its sterility. The great truth about its history concerning white men was that from Coronado's memorable trip into it in 1541 to its established settlement by white men three hundred years elapsed. In 1854 the estimated white population of Kansas numbered seven hundred —only thirteen years before our date of 1867, a date three hundred and twenty-six years after Coronado's tour.

Thus during three centuries after its discovery that remote mid-continent between a lofty mountain range and one of the longest river combinations in the world appears to have remained visited by only a few white men and by them treated as a dreaded plateau and valueless. This empire was, as seen, still occupied in 1867 by a barbarous race of redskins, now trying to drive back the white man, while also roamed at will mighty droves of bison whose hoofs and horns meant death. Once the Plains could be freed of these two enemies, the wiseacres admitted "she" might be of some account in summer for grazing. If any good, it would be for poor grades of cattle. Yet few dreamed of the Indians and buffalo being at a near date moved away, driven off or exterminated.

Railroads, however, were by 1867 penetrating this zone and demonstrating how its future might not lie under the scalping knife nor the hoofs of buffalo. The Kansas Pacific Railway from Kansas City across Kansas

to Denver reached the latter point in 1870, passing through Abilene in March, 1867. The Union Pacific Railway from Omaha across Nebraska had been constructed a little earlier. It was completed to Cheyenne, Wyoming, in 1867. This Company had been organized in Chicago in 1862, its first rail laid in July, 1865. By the end of 1867 five hundred and forty miles of track reached the summit of the Rocky Mountains. "The building of a Pacific steam road to connect the streams flowing into the Atlantic and Pacific was advocated as early as 1819, before a mile of railroad had been laid in any part of the world." On May 10, 1869, this at least became a fact in the joining of the Union Pacific with the Central Pacific from California at Promontory Summit, Utah—the first transcontinental route.

The occasion met with national enthusiasm on that day and with celebrations in various parts of the country. High dignitaries and officials congregated on the spot. The final spikes were of gold and silver and the last sledge was of silver. Chinese, Mexicans, Indians, half-breeds, Negroes as well as white laborers filled up the throng, Chinese having laid the rails from the west end and Irish from the east end. The magnet tapped one—two—three—then paused—"Done!" The final spike received the first blow by the President of the Central Pacific, followed by the Vice President of the Union Pacific. "Neither hit the spike the first time, but hit the rail, and were greeted by the lusty cheers of the onlookers, accompanied by the screams of the locomo-

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tives and the music of the military band. . . . Then the two trains were run together, the two locomotives touching at the point of junction, and the engineers of the two locomotives each broke a bottle of champagne on the other's engine. Then it was declared that the connection was made, and the Atlantic and Pacific were joined together, never to be parted." [1]

These two powerful civilizers on the Plains—the Union Pacific and the Kansas Pacific—stretched across a landscape of hostility, of habitual warfare. Men sometimes laid these ties and rails in bloodshed. Raids and fights livened the region. To be feared besides the red men, there ranged the stampeding, plunging multitudes of bison, tearing up and goring everything in their path.

After hot skirmishes, a few massacres of one sort or another, "Lo, the poor Indian" was rapidly driven from these iron tracks and from Kansas and Nebraska, and

---

[1] The above facts and quotations are from "How We Built the Union Pacific Railway," by Major-General G. M. Dodge, Chief Engineer, this book (the Company's only copy) having been generously furnished me by Mr. E. M. Kindler, Ass't Sec'y., for the purposes of this volume. In it General Dodge says in substance (p. 92):

During the winter of 1867-8 Cheyenne was possibly the greatest gambling place ever established on the Plains, and it was full of desperate characters. These got together, held a meeting and "jumped" the town, refusing to recognize the authorities we had put over the town or in any way to comply with our orders. They had commenced robbing our trainmen and committing other depredations. The situation was immediately remedied by the threat of Government troops.

Also (p.94): ". . . . a crowd of gamblers had taken our terminal point at Julesburg (Colorado) and refused to obey the local officers we had appointed over it. I wired General Casement to take back his track force, clean the place up, and sustain the officers. When I returned to Julesburg, I asked General Casement what he had done. He replied, 'I will show you.' He took me up to a little rise just beyond Julesburg and showed me a small graveyard, saying, 'General, they all died in their boots, but brought peace.' "

also the buffalo were disposed of. The rumor came down the Kansas Pacific in 1868 that Buffalo Bill alone had killed forty-two hundred and eighty bison in 1867 to furnish meat for those railroad contractors. As the cognomens of his two companions in the slaughter he chose two lawless names—Brigham for his steed and Lucretia Borgia for his breechloader.

The railways came to stay. The Oregon Trail, which gave publicity to northeastern Kansas and to Nebraska, and the Santa Fé Trail, which gave fame to the central and southern parts of Kansas, were soon to become two unused strings of weeds, then lost forever under the furrow.

But another contest, salient yet unforseen and of another kind, now sprang up for "Western Kansas." The history for which the State is noted had its scant arena of action along the eastern line, truly a Border Warfare. The remainder of the commonwealth, seven times larger, has been mainly ignored in standard annals. Casual readers are left to assume that Kansas passed with no particular anxiety and at once from the Kansas of John Brown and Quantrell to a quiet farm State throughout.

This is rather an incomplete, even truncated, treatment of its development. "Western Kansas" is omitted from the perspective, with a phase as serious for a while as it was imposing. It verged on the tragic while flourishing on a grand scale. It involved a showy strife, threatening to become desperate, between two representative

forces of progress. As to the outcome, pregnant with the future of this Desert, men guessed wrong if they ventured to guess at all.

The rivalry deciding the kind of civilization the Plains should have was to be between white men and not with Indians and buffalo. A race of a different latitude, of a different make-up, of a different mode and ideal of existence, invaded this upland basin, apparently determined on shaping its occupation to their ends and governing it outright. These men hailed from the Texan country to the south. And in this hamlet of Abilene there came to be witnessed another assault, as it were, from the South against the North. The assault swung the Lone Star State of the Southern Confederacy up near the parallel which Lee had more than once reached, only to be hurled away.

But not now the gallant boys in Gray in solid, armed phalanx! In their stead advanced other proud Southrons, the cowboys, an original cavalry, defiant, strongly inclined to be murderous, confident of sway, and to a degree backed by the influential Southern cattle drovers. This meeting of opposing forces took place between individuals or two groups of men. Opposite the cowpunchers, those new *conquistadores*, flanked by pistols and bowie knives and perfectly adapted to blood and thunder recitals, stood northern farmers and citizens, peaceable, looking neither for warring conquest nor militant supremacy, dull material for romance or epic.

It was to be the picturesque and adventurous against

the prosaic and humdrum. It was to be the migratory against the domestic, and lawlessness versus law and order. It was to be the herder's camp against the family. It was not only to be a desultory conflict between ranch and home but between grazer and feeder, soft grass flesh and hard grain flesh, raw bred and market beef. It was, in brief, to be the Texas longhorn against the northern shorthorn.

The epochal development and the epochal event referred to at the beginning of this chapter represented, first, the invasion by these Texas longhorn herds whose drovers sought, and then presumed to control, the market and the summer pastures of the Great Plains, free for the raising of their cheap cattle; and, second, the incomparably more important, yet wholly unsuspected, discovery relating to the question: Could the Plains be successfully farmed all the year round and stocked with shorthorn breeds? At about the middle, north and south, of the eastern section of this rather level, dry universe slumbered Abilene, about equi-distant from the Oregon Trail on the north and the Santa Fé Trail on the south. The hamlet lay by the Sixth Principal Meridian, one hundred and sixty-three miles west of Kansas City and about thirty miles west of Fort Riley. It was here that not only the Texas cattle incursion headed for and centered, but the major problem of the Plains, as indicated, was first fully tested and solved.

Had what we may call the Texan ideas of the Great Plains as only fit, if anything, for the grazing of cheap

or young cattle during part of the year proven correct, as usually assumed by those familiar then with the region, the Texan ideas would have prevailed and its development been entirely different. Low grade grazing herds in lieu of tilled farms would have been characteristic. The livestock cavalier in the ascendant, instead of the plodding, unspectacular farmer on foot! The Lone Star cowboy as the commanding type, not the northern plowboy!

CHAPTER II

"WESTERN KANSAS" AND NATIVE ABILENE IN 1867

A prominent pioneer could develop the following whimsical strain. He was a blunt ex-Union Kentucky soldier who had lost a leg in the war but none of his expletives.

This 'ere Great Plains is a runnin' country. Antelopes, coyotes, buffalo, Indians, steers, air constructed to whoop it up on a lope. Any direction is good—direct to the Rocky Mountains, Canada or Texas. To be run over is what the Plains is fit for. So horses naturally run away. An' a feller can run from as handy as he can run to. You'll find you'll git so that you can run like a antelope. You've got good long legs. They will come useful if you git chased out by the redskins or Texans. Folks mostly have long legs out 'ere. You don't see many short-geared ones. Women neither. To be able to light out quick is necessary for all kinds of animiles, high or low. The eternal breezes, winds, storms, air swifter too than anywhere else. They git up an' git as well as anybody.

The question mark, as mentioned, denoted everything on the Great Plains in 1867, accompanied not only by vague, thin hopes but more emphatically by fears or

half-resigned despairs. In recalling the usual empty situation when our account begins, it should not be forgotten that the Civil War, in which the eastern one-eighth of Kansas had been conspicuous, was little more than over. Strong antipathies, violent feelings, between Northerners and Southerners had not had time to subside. As yet no intimate contact between them came about on the Plains where the active plan was to clear the territory of devastating Indians and bison.

Abilene lay flanked by Fort Riley on the east and by Forts Harker and Hays on the west. Council Springs, now called Council Grove, not far to the southeast, was still an Indian headquarters. The red men there had become peaceful. Small bands or single red men frequently passed through Abilene or briefly tarried there during the five-year period of this narrative. They occasioned alarm only at times among housewives and children.

The railroad, as said, reached the hamlet in the spring of 1867. Though most of the people of the United States had likely not ridden much on one anywhere, if at all, population promptly followed this thoroughfare, so novel in that West. The Kansas Pacific ran north of the central east and west line of the State, and development soon began there across the Desert, being also encouraged by the formidable existence of Fort Riley.

Just west of this Fort lay Dickinson county (with Abilene, the county seat). The county is nearly altogether upland like the rest of the Plains. In its slightly

wooded creek valleys and river valley lived a few, necessarily scattered, settlers. Through about the middle, from west to east, meanders the Smoky Hill River, muddy like all streams of the Plains. It is of consequence in that region. But its valley is shallow and averages a mile or so in width. The river swerves back and forth here from one bank of low bluffs to the other. The bluffs are irregular lines of squat hills, forming the jagged banks of the stream when in high flood. Jutting out from these bluffs are shelves of friable limestone. The bluffs seemed worthless to any newcomer, yet their limestone, easy to shape, pleasant to the eye and durable in that comparatively dry climate, later became of valuable use. To anyone in the valley these bluffs—this low-browed foreland—hid from view the gentle retreat of the hinterland—the endless prairies: that inspiring feature of American topography.

The rivers and creeks of the Plains had very thin rows of scraggling timber of which the cottonwood was typical. Rarely did it become a handsome tree. Its limbs of soft wood broke off readily in the desert winds, and it decayed rather early or survived in partial decay. The narrow timber fringes added a somewhat desolate appearance to the landscapes, because also the cottonwood leaves soon turned yellow, easily wafted away. Along the streams the almost constant day-time breezes among these clicking leaves produced a melancholic murmur, the effect of which was topped off by the plaintive notes of mourning-doves.

This description applied in a general way to the whole immense Desert. The banks of the rivers and creeks were first taken up by pioneers. In Dickinson county, as an illustration, the creek valleys became perhaps the earliest occupied. The way this happened claims a moment's attention. A settler with his family would locate in a bend of a stream near a spring. Here wood would be found and some shelter from the storms that had free range on the uplands. Such a man would be an outstanding character—the best grade of these frontiersmen. He might be a German. He would have after a while a post-office on his land, be a Justice of Peace and the leader in his district. These stood out as very worthy men of the primitive type, with limited education. They would prosper slowly, meagerly, raising along the streams small spring crops, accumulating some livestock and bearing up well under the deprivations. In the absence of a market for a surplus, there existed no incentive to produce much more than sufficed for individual needs.

Soon a much larger class came in, less striking. They were a good, quiet folk having almost no "larnin," little ambition, small inclination for hard work. Hard work they regarded as of small profit in a land flatly discouraging much improvement. Shiftlessness was the common term applied to them instead of enterprise, punctuality, thrift.

They hugged the banks in dugouts or small ramshackle affairs, patched up almost anyway with what lay

conveniently at hand—a few rough-hewn logs, dirt, sticks. Wood and water they found, of course, handy. The little gardens of corn and other food stuffs, growing quickly in that damp, rich, riparian soil, required only shallow plowing and light hoeing. The occupiers with their few head of livestock could live in a somewhat heedless fashion, not dreaming of the pregnant future at hand for that Sahara. Usually they held some kind of incompleted title to the spot they had located on, for sometimes they were squatters. This population could be classed as essentially rovers. When a more energetic species moved in, the former were apt to move out and on west to new pioneer conditions more to their taste for plenty of room with little to do.

Though they lived in slack circumstances, they showed themselves as hospitable and accommodating, according to the rule on that frontier. To be easy-going constituted their idea of life. It was "easy come, easy go" on the Plains where, they thought, not anything could amount to much. Their shortcomings should be dealt with indulgently since their opportunities had been rude. When the better grade of immigrants began to arrive in 1868, those of the first settlers who "stuck by" the country, instead of getting back into their wagons headed toward the glorious sunsets, could be numbered among the first citizens to want schools and churches and to become worth-while members of their communities.

The only village in Dickinson county in 1867 was Abilene, soon the vital spot in the early development of

the American Desert. From what my brother, who had gone there that fall, told us and from what I saw in the spring of 1868, there had been in 1867, in the native settlement, about ten cabins besides the more extensive establishment of Tim Hersey. Mud creek ran through the village on its way south to the Smoky Hill River, a mile away. On the creek's west bank you saw the Hersey place. And just west of it stood the small stone, solidly yet trimly constructed, Government stable. It had been the first relay station west of Fort Riley for the military and passenger service on this main, direct route from Kansas City to Denver. This stable, already abandoned, remained for many years.

Immediately to the east of the creek was the real hamlet where dwelt pioneers of a somewhat higher type than the larger class along the streams in the countrysides. The adults numbered about a score. They lived here in the usual one-room home in lax surroundings. These homes, in the main, consisted partly of logs conspicuously plastered together with a sort of clay mud and banked up with dirt to keep out the weather from the ground floors. The leaky roofs were of poles, brush and grass held down by dirt. Being weather-stained and spread over with soil or dust by the winds, these cabins looked muddy. J. B. Edwards[1] says: ". . . properly speaking, they were mud-covered huts." McCoy remarked (p. 44) of Abilene in June and July '67[2]: " . . .

[1] Edwards's letter of March 13, 1924 to me.

[2] "Historic Sketches of the Cattle Trade in the West and Southwest" (1874).

a very small, dead place, consisting of about one dozen log huts, low, small, rude affairs, four-fifths of which were covered with dirt for roofing; indeed, but one shingle roof could be seen in the whole city. The business of the burg was conducted in two small rooms, mere log huts, and of course the inevitable saloon, also in a log hut, could be found." He speaks of the settlers as living then "in dugouts or mere hovels constructed of poles and dirt, and whose poverty was extreme." (P. 65.)

So vegetated the village pioneers on the Plains. Past these habitations in Abilene in the spring of 1868 was vaguely indicated a grassy street, soon to become of such expanded and doubtful fame, where the post-office and the two or three other cramped, crude places of business had located. The tiny post-office included the court room and register of deeds office. A plank served for a railroad station until well into 1868. A small prairie dog village occupied the middle of the scene.

Such was the native Abilene of 1867 as I saw it the next spring. The tents and other signs of Texas cattle life had promptly disappeared except the stockyards, barn, office and Drovers' Cottage.[1] Of the hamlet T. F. (Tim) Hersey emerged as the chief character. A civil engineer, he had some education and decided ambitions. He proved to be a good man and full of fun. Tim, beholding in my brother an eastern greenhorn (a term changed later into "tenderfoot"), drove him about the

[1] Confirmed by Charles F. Gross in his letter in *The Abilene Daily Reflector*, April 24, 1925, quoted from on our pages 33, 34 and 364.

country, lauding its virtues like the later land boomer. He once remarked:

"See 'em prairies all round here? I'm losing a million dollars a year on 'em. Too darn bad for a feller." My brother looked up keenly at the wrinkled visage. It was what he wanted to know. How could a man make money hereabouts?

"A million dollars? How is that?"

"By not havin' a million head of sheep grazin' on 'em."

Tim loved to be a jesting soul, of the garrulous type of those pioneers. He liked to "chin." Many of them inclined to muteness, being taciturn rather than free talkers. Hersey was hamstrung as to religion, like the usual run of frontiersmen, but Mrs. Hersey was a devout Methodist and he respected her for it. A mild, quiet, model woman, she scarcely stirred out of the house. I recall that one Sunday evening in 1868 our family walked across the creek railroad bridge to the Hersey home for a Bible reading. Mrs. Hersey had named the village Abilene[1] which impressed our family as an original and pretty name. She took it from Luke, third chapter, first verse—"tetrarch of Abilene." To my brother's surprise the name, instead of being new, was as old as history. The ancient tetrarchy of Abilene, northwest of Damascus and on the road to Baalbec, had

[1] This was always understood in Abilene to be the fact. In the Kansas Historical Collections (vol. 7, p. 475) there is an unsupported statement that the name was suggested to C. H. Thompson by a Findlay Patterson of Pennsylvania.

Abila for its capital, and here a false Moslem tradition, evidently confused by a similarity of names, placed the burial spot of Abel. The word Abilene represented the Greek form of the local word Abila, which experts think likely means meadow. Tim Hersey could hit it off grinningly in an off-hand way:

"Yep—Luke, third chapter—peetrack of Abilene or some such. Well, anyway, maw lit on it an' I says, let her rip. Abilene she be, she a Methodis'. This bein' a dry country, it ain't particlarly healthy for Baptis'."

Those frontier women on the Plains were the hardy, resolute, subservient and proper mates for their men. Often, it seemed, they could stand almost anything better than civilization. They liked to be friendly, helpful. As an overshining fact, it is important to emphasize that these pioneers, men and women, were moral. To associate them with intoxication in saloons, and in bawdy houses had there then been any, is unwarranted. Yet this can be found in Emerson Hough's "North of 36," which was insisted on as an accurate book by *The Saturday Evening Post* and others in public prints, without any cited authority because none could be cited. As for drunkenness and sexual immorality among that resident population, there may be said to have been none.

It should be explained that the one or two "log hut" saloons in Abilene in 1867 and in early 1868 meant unoffending, drowsy places, not for carousing, and little frequented for their keg of liquor. Whisky was used sparingly as a medicine to tone up systems against "spring

fever" or ward off a chill, since drugs and doctors could scarcely be had. A saloon as a sort of drug store fitted in practically with the seemliness of the moral conduct of that frontier folk.

A good word may be said for whisky, or "bitters" as such drinks were called on the Plains. They served sadly needed purposes in sickness. In emergencies of life or death, like snake bites, they rallied systems to exert full powers, summoned an individual's whole strength to throw off attacks. They succeeded mainly if the sufferer responded with sufficient vitality in reserve. They failed if he didn't respond, in which instance he would not likely have survived anyhow. For it must be remembered that had local doctors, medicines and facilities for treatments existed, they would not have been as good as to-day. Many diseases or accidents then considered hopeless are now cured. Also in the Desert, quickness of results was the urgent need. Long illnesses could meet with no proper circumstances for nursing. "Bitters" speedily cured or killed and that came as a great blessing under the ordinary nomadic conditions.

All these wagon immigrants we are describing belonged, in their way, to the plain American stock that had constantly first broken into the wilderness. Such forerunners opened up and still open up Yankee history in the West. One respected them as pioneers with a kind of solemnity. They immigrated chiefly from the near borders and were used to roughing it. Farm folk, more particularly livestock folk, they had sold out because

their country became too much settled up. A near neighbor, as hinted, couldn't well be tolerated. They hankered after further adventure in the newer Occident. So they had pulled up stakes, bound for the wide Afar.

Within their class those frontier people showed a good deal of the American varying individuality. They found a blankness and if they moved on they left behind still primitive, though of course improved, surroundings. As I recall with sympathy their majority prairie "schooner" type, I find little gloss or glamour in their grim life. They showed the endurance of wiriness, but their rawbone, rawhide existence forced them to be unkempt, gaunt. Many excellent traits had they, but how necessarily hard their subsistence! They and their few women-folk furnished figures too wizened, weary, forlorn, for the buoyant pages of the adolescent pageantry of twentieth-century wild-west fiction and screen stage.

It is a mistake made by later writers, not then on the ground, to fail to distinguish clearly between this population who had come by wagon or on horseback and the first immigrants following by rail. The latter class was in general more progressive, advanced. To unite the two is misleading. It should be borne in mind, further, that exceptional cases existed among all pioneer men on the Plains and their circumstances, and we should guard against being too fixed or unreservedly wholesale in descriptions of them. One should avoid spreading out unhesitatingly into generalities from isolated instances.

These are faults customarily made by the absentee who also is prone to assume that what was true of one locality and year was true of another, though they may each and all have been quite dissimilar.

To remark again about the scene of virgin Nature round about these pioneers, it may be observed that while the prairies, with their indulgent levelness or tender slopes, looked as if graced with smoothness, one came to know they were hard to ride over in a vehicle. The prairie grass, to resist the winds, largely formed in clumps, the dirt being swept away from the roots. The clumps made a bumpy surface which jolted the driver seriously. A day's buggy ride left one lame and sore. And you feared rattlesnakes coiled around or through the bunches of grass, viciously resembling them in color. Most dreaded of all, a horse might step into a gopher hole and break a leg ten miles from home. Your object in carrying a revolver was not to shoot at Indians, buffalo or rattlesnakes, but to kill the horse.

The little streams, called branches or forks, tawny with mud, sometimes swollen, needed to be forded to find locations by compass. Although the Government surveyed the country, the corner stones had nearly always not yet been seen by the few inhabitants. Men measured distances to such landmarks by tying handkerchiefs to wheels and counting the revolutions. Trips would be lonely enough if not moderately animated by racing antelopes and rabbits, and by prairie dog towns. One watched Indians occasionally skirting along a divide. A

herd of bison might be thought to darken the western horizon. You might get lost and not return home until next day.

But the grateful winters! Sunshine almost steady, little snow or ice, no extreme, sustained cold weather, few rains, no penetrating dampness, marked the great difference from the inclement winters of the distant East, often locked in a polar whiteness. And the salubrious western air, bracing Hope to paint eventualities in tones of rose and gold!

CHAPTER III

THE TEXAS CATTLE TRADE AND CHISHOLM TRAIL

The amusing case of the Chisholm Trail illustrates how easily and rapidly things historical may slip into the indefinite, into the unknown, into the classification of the non-existent. With such a process of disappearance history can be loosely or mistakenly written or prepared by incompetent hands.

The Old Time Trail Drivers' Association, a Texan organization, had wrestled amid open disagreements over the location of this Trail. The matter was finally referred to three private Texas friends from whom came this final report to the Association by one W. P. Anderson:

> Among the first herds that started north from Texas . . . (were) used the old military trails, which were supposed to run from Texas to Sedalia, Mo., and crossed the Red River at Colbert's Ferry. . . . The first division from this trail was where the trail left the Sedalia trail for Baxter Springs (Kansas). It was originally used by this same John Chisholm, the Cherokee Indian cattle trader, to supply Fort Scott, Kan. The basic ground for the commencement of this trail was probably about the mouth of the Grand River[1] where it emptied into the Arkansas.

[1] Neosho River.

> The most prominent branch of this trail runs directly up the Arkansas River as far as Fort Zarah, which was about a mile east of where Great Bend, Kan., now stands. From along this trail there were diversions made by these cattle that went into the army supply at Fort Riley, Fort Harker, near Ellsworth; Fort Hays, near Hays City; Fort Wallace, now Wallace, Kan., the main base being in the Arkansas bottom on what is now called Chisholm Creek near the present city of Wichita, the trail continuing on west as far as Fort Bend [1] and Fort Lyon in Colorado, for the delivery of these cattle, hence all cattle trailed from Texas across the Arkansas River would, perforce, strike at some point the old Chisholm Trail, hence practically all cattle whether by Colbert's Ferry, Red River Crossing or Doan's Store or elsewhere intermediate, would naturally use some part of the original Cherokee Indian Chisholm Trail on some part of its journey to Western Kansas.

This museum piece of English, suitable for a collection of bewildered historical curiosities, was accepted by vote by The Old Time Trail Drivers' Association in 1917. As one member, C. H. Rust, wrote: "I think they are trying to put the kibosh on us." If one can get anything lucid out of it about the historic Chisholm Trail, it is that "the most prominent branch" (the Chisholm?) was a trail from east to west up along the Arkansas River into Colorado. This is also a "facer" in that it, singly and alone, would strike down the united and reliable evidence which shows, as will appear, that the historic Chisholm Trail was a south to north trail leading from the Red River up to Abilene, Kansas. Ander-

[1] Meaning Fort Bent.

son confused apparently in part the "old Shawnee trail," as may be judged from J. G. McCoy in his book, page 93. He says the Chisholm Trail was "direct from Red River to Kansas." The Texas Association had taken this unsuccessful procedure instead of consulting Government and State of Kansas material or those who directly brought about the blazing of the Trail to Abilene in 1867-8.[1]

Thus this historical comedy was left in Texas by bungling hands on the subject to the confusion of historians; and the very distinctive existence of the historic Chisholm Trail, which the Association gathered together yearly to celebrate, promised to end in the smoke

[1] Later Emerson Hough in his popular thriller "North of 36" took this south to north highway to Abilene for his theme in this story of 1867.

A young Texan adjunct professor of history, W. P. Webb, identifying himself by "History Department, University of Texas," came into print, evidently to justify this thriller as accurate or historically accurate though its author expressly disclaimed such a purpose in his Author's Note. The professor heedlessly contradicted himself since he made out Hough's book as historically false by asserting—also without, like the above report, offering any proofs—that there "was no such trail" as the Chisholm—"there were trails continually shifting." Still more astonishing history! As well say that no Santa Fé Trail ever had actual being because there were branches and its courses varied during the years.

Perhaps he had taken offense, ignored by the Texas Association. At any rate this apparent representative of that Department put the other in the silly position of solemnly and with much trouble being able at length to adopt a statement as to the location of a trail that had never existed. Members of the Association, however, seemed not restrained, but with much emotion came, like the Texan professor, to the *quasi* support of "North of 36" as correct history although its account also disagreed with what the Association had formally announced as true. The enthusiasm of these Texans for the book as authentic was still more amusing because in it the Texas cattle men and fathers of present-day Texans are presented as of 1867 in a picture of such low-lived, drunken obscenity and fornication as has never before, I believe, appeared in American annals of pioneers. *The Saturday Evening Post,* which had published Hough's serial, vouched for it all as correct. (See Appendix.)

and ashes of battle. Indeed, what the usual condition, as indicated by their young professor, in those ante- and anti-Prohibition times must have been of those old cattle drivers, now gravely writing of their experiences up and down the non-existent (as claimed) Chisholm Trail to Abilene, may be unflatteringly imagined.

We have pictured the humble situation of Abilene and its score of adult denizens in 1867. But in the latter half of that year a development began alongside, apart and wholly different. As J. G. McCoy might have expressed it: something struck the drowsy burg. This commencement of a dramatic, tremendous and fundamental movement was to accelerate and enlarge for some years the evolution of the hamlet and of the Great Plains into civilization.

T. C. Henry, after his unfortunate cotton-raising adventure in Alabama, became persuaded by the example of Lincoln to go to Springfield, Illinois, and read Blackstone. There, as a farmer's son, he made the acquaintance of a forceful cattle man who influenced him to move to Abilene and seek his fortune instead of pursuing the law.

This man, who became the first upbuilder on the Great Plains, was Joseph G. McCoy, of Springfield, with whom his brother was associated. The construction of the Kansas Pacific Railroad inspired McCoy with a wonderful idea, namely: the railroad would furnish an adequate and sorely needed market in Abilene, Kansas, for the languishing cattle breeding industry of Texas.

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Joseph G. McCoy, the father of the Texas Cattle Trade on the Plains and second mayor of Abilene (1871)

The Civil War ruined the livestock business there. The Federal control of the Mississippi River during the war had closed off Texas, and an enormous cattle-holding accumulated. There existed not a mile, or scarcely a mile, of railroad in the State. Animals south of the Red River were said to bring only five dollars a head, the average beef realizing, of course, less or merely forty cents per hundred pounds gross weight. When "the late unpleasantness" terminated, the Texan drover lacked a satisfactory market. He had only New Orleans, Old Mexico and to a very limited extent Mobile. Those points lay distant, becoming less easy to reach and more expensive to sell in. This proved all the more true for the larger drovers, and to market large droves was the natural and economic ambition.

The situation, then, led the enthusiastic McCoy to undertake to establish a gigantic enterprise that would make this American Desert and Texas leap forward at once into an immeasurable prosperity and a formidable conspicuousness in the nation. Down south was the inexhaustible supply; up in central eastern Kansas should be the ample shipping mart. McCoy wrote (p. 51): ". . . it was fully the first of July (1867) before it was decided to attempt a cattle depot at Abilene—or elsewhere." [1]

[1] Charles F. Gross, in *The Abilene Daily Reflector*, April 24, 1925: "I think . . . I was responsible mainly for the starting of the cattle trade in Abilene . . . I at least feel that I was . . . This survey took us through the heart of Texas, and the cattle ranges. We saw cattle, wild horses and buffalo galore. After coming home in 1866 I had many talks with the McCoy Brothers, especially with Joe. It started his imagination and progressiveness to the end

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Joseph G. McCoy, a stockman, not an agriculturalist, was a natural leader, a great promoter. His vision and energy enabled him to take big but necessary chances. He could eliminate space and time as far as possible in that day. He was a wide public benefactor, inspiring faith, hastening progress. Though disposed to overreach, he left a booming improvement in his wake, and countless men profited by him richly. He became the father of the Texas Cattle Trade as a regular business on the Great Plains.[1]

To McCoy's one book, already cited from, written by him, published at his expense in 1874, sold by him, and now almost unobtainable, one must look as the only, and on the whole authoritative, volume on this Texas cattle subject. Although much better educated than the average man of his time and region, he explained that he was not a writer nor even certain of correct language. His English is not always exact. He often confuses dates or omits

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that he started to find a way to get those cattle to market and he proved it too. Before I knew anything of his plans he had them well on the way. I then found I was included in the game to at first go to Texas with Col. Hitt of Springfield, Ill., to spread the deal there. This is the way I came to help stake the cattle trail to Abilene and thereafter to be connected with the McCoys so intimately and know all the moves in building up the trade there."

[1] Gross says in his above letter: "McCoy was a man of advanced vision; he had what all men need but many lack—imagination. He was progressive and far ahead of most men of that day. . . . Whoever writes a full and complete history of early Abilene must accord to J. G. McCoy vision of its future. It is too bad Joe could not live to see what it has grown to be, for Joe did not see only cattle; he saw a future not only for Abilene but for Dickinson county as an agricultural section of Kansas and also the State which to-day astonishes everyone—a great and glorious State."

I quote from a letter of J. B. Edwards to me, October 10, 1924: "In many ways he (McCoy) was a noble type of man, strong in character, with a large brain, but always seemed to me to be visionary in much of his life work. I always, though, liked him, and shall ever remember him as being in many ways

them, lending a vagueness as to facts and conditions in any particular year; and he blends, into a unit, parts that should have been dwelt upon specifically. His buoyant optimism persuaded him, doubtless, sometimes to overstate figures about, for instance, the size of cattle traffic and herds, shipments and prices. But this lively and strongly flavored volume is generally true.

McCoy's case illustrates the towering difficulties nearly always encountered by upbuilders of the West. It was not after all strange, considering the description of the Plains which we have given, that railroad men and financiers persisted in being blind to his practical, imminent plan. Yet it promised to bring abundant cash on the hoof into a barren desert and to furnish a profitable traffic for the railroad, which had none to speak of. It would inaugurate and facilitate commerce between Kansas City and Chicago buyers and Texan sellers, whereas the two groups were widely separated by a partly wild waste and unknown to each other.

Despite powerful opposers and obstacles, including the prevalent belief that Texas beef was not eatable, McCoy, determined and a spellbinder, immediately began activities in Abilene. He raised rather miraculously sufficient money to build, by September 1, 1867, a shipping "yard" with large Fairbanks scales, a barn and an

a noble man, kind-hearted, generous and always faithful to his friends. I have said I thought him to have been visionary in his make-up, but I must admit he built up a vast business when he opened the door as he did and found a way to market the vast herds of cattle in Texas, as he did, though in doing so his vision carried him too far as it was the sole cause of his losing a quite large fortune."

office, and to commence the construction of a large, three-story, frame hotel for the accommodation of Texan drovers and eastern buyers. This Drovers' Cottage did not open for guests until the next spring.

McCoy's program was that the soft, grass-fed cattle, drifting in multitudes over the Texan prairies, should be driven north in summer, feeding on grass along the route. In a few weeks they would reach cattle cars in Abilene. He selected this as the future capital of the industry because, for one reason, the village was the nearest one eastward which avoided more occupied and fenced conditions. It meant an open, free grazing range all the way from Texas while being most convenient to Kansas City.

The Texas cattle drovers, later called drivers, owned the herds, and they with their employed cowboys, their belts all filled with money received for the season's drive to Abilene, could return south. In the winter another herd could be rounded up, pushed north the next summer, and sold at the railroad for shipment to the *abattoirs* east. Abilene, in a region judged by these men too dry for agriculture ever to be thought of, would consequently become the undisputed cattle metropolis and the business permanent. A gigantic monopoly, indeed, natural, simple, most desirable, incalculably profitable!

While McCoy put his operations in motion in Abilene in July, 1867, another task was to get notice to drovers in Texas in time for shipment that season and to adver-

tise among them the enticing feasibility of the scheme. It seemed a long stretch to Texas by horseback or wagon through a lawless, uninhabited tract—about three hundred miles in air line to the Canadian River, about fifty miles more to the Red River and, of course, considerably more when traveled.

Since the location and even the existence of the resultant Chisholm Trail have been disputed by some non-Kansans, we refer to Frontispiece and to U. S. (General Land Office, 1876,) map of Indian Territory (Okla.) showing this Trail and no other. For several years thereafter Government maps furnished like information. No trails were represented on Kansas maps. Nor is there apparently to be obtained a Government map of the Indian Territory dated between the late 60's and 1876.

On this map will be seen indicated uniquely the Abilene (or Chisholm) Trail in the north central section, south of Caldwell, Kansas—a line virtually followed by the present Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific Railway. The Trail is here, in 1876, called Abilene Cattle Trail and Stage Road; and farther and directly south you will twice see the name Abilene Cattle Trail. The reason that the name here, in 1876 and later, had been altered to Abilene Trail from Chisholm Trail is that after the Texas Trade receded from Abilene in 1872, this name better distinguished that Trail from trails or branch trails springing up afterward to other points.

As a feeder to this, the mother, Trail, there will be observed, joining it from the southeast at Cimarron River, Chisholm's Cattle Trail connecting with other trails and roads in that southeast direction. This was merely a branch of the main Trail. Another feeder also connected with it at the Cimarron River. It came from Fort Sill on the southwest and is styled on the map as Stage Road to Wichita, Kansas. This branch, though used for cattle, was not primarily or distinctively a cattle trail like the main Trail lying to the eastward, as seen on the map. The Government and traders used this branch especially for the transportation of supplies that had nothing to do with the Texas Cattle Trade to the northern railway at Abilene.

From the history of Sedgwick county and Wichita, Kansas, in the commercial or subscription "History of Kansas" (1883) by A. T. Andreas one notes the following interesting account (p. 1385):

> Early in the spring of 1864, the Wichita Indians and affiliating tribes, who had been driven from the Indian Territory in the winter of 1861-2, and who had made temporary homes in Woodson County (Kansas), removed from there and established a camp at the mouth of the Little Arkansas. The name of their camp was Wichita, from which the present City of Wichita derived its name. These Indians engaged in peaceful avocations, cultivating and harvesting large fields of corn and vegetables. They remained until the fall of 1867, when they returned south. With the Wichitas came Jesse Chisholm, a half-breed Cherokee, and an adopted member of the Wichitas. He built his house on the stream which derived its name from

him, east of the present City of Wichita, and moved into it with his family. He also established a 'ranch' between the two rivers, three miles above their junction. . . . In the spring of 1865 Mr. Chisholm located a trail from his 'ranch' to the present site of the Wichita Agency on the Wichita River,[1] Indian Territory, distance of 220 miles. This trail subsequently became and is still known as the 'Chisholm Trail.' It was established for the purpose of enabling the traders in the Arkansas Valley to obtain wagon communication with the Indians in the Indian Territory, and the trail was used by these traders for years in the transportation of merchandise to tribes in the Territory. Afterward the trail was used by Texas cattle drivers, and is now used (1882) by the Government in the transportation of supplies to Fort Sill, forty miles south of Wichita Agency. The principal points on the trail are Wichita, Clearwater, Caldwell, Pond Creek,[2] Skeleton Ranch, Buffalo Springs, mouth of Turkey Creek, Cheyenne Agency, Wichita Agency and Fort Sill. Chisholm died on the north fork of the Canadian River in the Indian Territory, March 4, 1868, of cholera morbus, caused by eating bear's grease that had been poisoned by being melted in a brass kettle.

This agrees with the Government maps except that it mistakes the commercial branch from the Cimarron River to Fort Sill for the main Chisholm Trail, this branch being particularly, as said, a shipping and stage route. The authority of the Government geographers on the spot must be accepted unqualifiedly and the Abilene Cattle Trail represented here by them must be recognized as the definitely located old, original historic Chis-

[1] Correctly Washita River.
[2] Round Pond creek.

holm (later known as Abilene) Trail. The fact that it alone appears is sufficient evidence of its unique and distinguishing importance. (See Appendix, p. 369).

C. H. Rust in "The Trail Drivers of Texas" confirms the Government map line through the Indian Territory, starting his detailed description from Red River Station on Red River.[1] He says (vol. 1, p. 36): ". . . if this is not the old Chisholm Cow Trail, then there is no Chisholm Trail. It is just what we call 'the old Chisholm Trail.'" He adds that he believes "the old Chisholm Cow Trail started at San Antonio, Texas, and ended at Abilene, Kansas." A tendency is to stretch it between these two extreme points, about six hundred and fifty miles in air line, or nearly the distance from New York City to Chicago, or the length of the Santa Fé Trail.

From the north end of Chisholm's Trail at Wichita, Kansas, as established by Chisholm himself, McCoy extended it past Newton, Kansas, to Abilene. Chisholm had nothing to do with this nor with the location of either the main Trail (or its Fort Sill branch) south of the Cimarron River.[2]

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[1] "The Trail Drivers of Texas" has value and much interest as a compilation of old-time Texan cattle men's recitals of their trips. It is a home-made, two-volume production, so poorly edited by a local man (J. Marvin Hunter) that he confessed therein to few qualifications for the job which concerned a subject of which he personally knew nothing. The different copies vary in materials and paging. George W. Saunders of Texas fathered the undertaking and deserves the credit. These recitals number about 250. The production is nothing like a formal history and no attempt was made to correct the historical and other errors which abound. McCoy and Abilene are only mentioned incidentally. None of the recounters says he was there in 1867 and only about fifteen percent speak of being there at any time.

[2] Edwards's letter of October 10, 1924, to me.

McCoy says (p. 92):

> Of these trails there are several . . . but the principal trail now traveled (1874) is more direct and is known as 'Chisholm Trail,' so named from a semi-civilized Indian who is said to have traveled it first. [And on page 121]: The cattle trail broken and driven over in 1867 from the crossing of the Arkansas River . . . on the present site of the City of Wichita, to Abilene, was not direct but circuitous. In order to straighten up this trail and bring the cattle direct to Abilene . . . an engineer corps was sent out under the charge of Civil Engineer T. F. Hersey. Mr. Hersey with compass and flagman and detail of laborers with spades and shovels for throwing up mounds of dirt to mark the route located by the engineers, started out and ran almost due south from Abilene until the crossing of the Arkansas River was reached. Meeting at the Arkansas River the first drove of cattle of the season, the party returned, piloting the herd over the new trail.

Thus is located definitely the old, historic Chisholm Trail from Red River Station on the Red River to Abilene, Kansas, along which pathway the organized Texas Cattle Trade first started north and its herds came regularly to Abilene for four years beginning with 1868. Or one may say five years from 1867. This dominant Trail should not be confused with branches called Chisholm or other names. The mother Trail never went north of Abilene. It stopped near there at the Smoky Hill River. The earliest accounts in "The Trail Drivers of Texas" make it clear that there was "the old Chisholm Trail" and that this first cattle thoroughfare up on the Plains ended at the only shipping point then—

Abilene with its big stockyards on the railway. Emerson Hough wrote in his Author's Note in "North of 36":

> There is no Gregg, no Parkman, no Chittenden for the lost and forgotten trail (Chisholm Trail to Abilene). Although almost as important as the east-and-west railroads in the early development of the trans-Missouri, it has no map, no monument, no history, almost no formulated condition. There is a comprehensive literature covering our west-bound expansion, but of the great north- and south-pastoral road almost the contrary must be said, such is the paucity of titles.[1]

In its northern terminus in Dickinson county, Kansas, after being tramped over by the later droves, the Chisholm Trail became a thoroughfare usually composed of from twelve to twenty single smooth paths, closely side by side, so that stock could be conveniently driven along without the damage to hoofs that raw prairies might cause. The paths developed into grooves a foot or more deep. Owing to the dry, firm soil, they were neatly cut. The Trail, generally speaking, varied in width at rivers up to a hundred yards. At intervals it widened to a mile. An average day's drive meant about ten miles and, as a

[1] Philip Ashton Rollins, born in 1869 and apparently familiar with Wyoming and that region in the 1890's, wrote in "The Cowboy" of 1922: ". . . from and after 1866, a horde of cattle . . . annually marched up the route . . . known at first as the Chisholm Trail. . . . The parading cattle in 1866 numbered three hundred thousand." (P. 10.)

This can not be said to accord with known facts. This Trail, designed to furnish the only organized shipping mart (at Abilene) for Texas cattle, was laid out in the late summer of 1867 and first regularly used in 1868. In the latter year, according to McCoy's figures in his book, about 75,000 head from this Trail was shipped from Abilene; and there were received in Kansas City, the great final market, 120,827 head as late as 1871 and 236,800 in 1872. McCoy gives, as will be seen, the figure for 1867 at Abilene as 35,000.

rule, it took about three months to make the trip from Texas to Abilene.

Nothing was much more familiar to me than the Chisholm Trail. Its very name seemed curiously appropriate. I could lie down, sunk out of sight, in one of its grooves and listen by the half-hour to that sweetest sound of my frontier boyhood—the undisturbed song of the meadow larks. The Trail, sinuous and dark colored, could be seen far off, its rank weeds contrasting with the prairie grass. For many years after its incipient abandonment in 1872 in the central region of the Plains, it was missed in places by the plow and remained a weedy ribbon to the eye. The sight of it always stirred in my youthful breast strange feelings of transgressing romance when I thought of its killings, the flight of bad men along it, the lonely trips over it southward by single cowboys, chased out of the country. It lay associated with the kind of violent adventures I knew of in Abilene—a road of more or less wicked glory.

McCoy's feat in getting Texas cattle to shipment in Abilene was in a measure accomplished.[1]

Edwards remarks in his letter of October 6, 1924, to me:

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[1] His Abilene firm: McCoy Brothers, J. P. McCoy being the junior and less conspicuous member. It is sometimes made to appear, in newspaper accounts written more for excitement than facts, that "Colonel" J. J. Meyers or Myers of Texas associated himself with this firm. He was not a member. He brought herds to Abilene merely to sell like any other drover, having nothing to do with the financing and other work connected with establishing a market there. He had only advised McCoy in June 1867 that it would be a good thing if such a market could be made ready.

> McCoy sent Wm. Sugg [1] down into the upper part of the Indian Territory to induce the cattle men to drive to Abilene in 1867 and his efforts succeeded quite well. And in the early spring of 1868 he sent Col. Hitt, Charles Gross and I think one other man to Texas for the same purpose.

Though the time was short and there was no beaten trail, McCoy reported in his book about thirty-five thousand head as marketed at Abilene that fall of 1867; the first shipment, September 5.

The average price he gives stood at fifteen dollars a head. The amount of cash thus exchanged was around five hundred thousand dollars—a "mighty" sum for "Western Kansas" where there had been practically no money nor any prospect of much. But almost none of this profit remained in the native hamlet. To celebrate and advertise the first shipment, McCoy had a banquet in Abilene for an excursion of several Illinois stockmen and others. Large tents were put up for the day's accommodations.

It is sometimes the way of the world that valuable men are forgotten for less valuable ones. The name of Joseph G. McCoy, an influential empire builder of the West, the maker of Abilene and of the imposing Texas Cattle Trade on the Plains, has been virtually ignored while the name of Wild Bill Hickok, the chief white killer of white men in the Desert, is a household word.

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[1] McCoy says in July, 1867 (p. 122). And on page 124: "In 1868 the trade really began."

Indeed the McCoy of 1867, a practicing Christian, has been at the same time degraded in wild-west fiction—"North of 36"—whereas Wild Bill appears beside him here as one almost exalted. Yet this author is editorially upheld as reliable by *The Saturday Evening Post* and evidently by a representative of the History Department of the University of Texas. (See Appendix.)

CHAPTER IV

THE YEAR 1868

Our family built the first frame dwelling in Abilene and moved into it in May, 1868. It was a novelty there, being not only frame but lathed and plastered. We owned the block and our house stood in its center with no other buildings but our barn, as we called it. Adjacent on the east rose Drovers' Cottage, with the stockyards just beyond. Immediately on our west was to flourish the Texas section of South First Street (called Texas Street) where the awful Lone Star activities erupted. Its two branches ran along the two sides of our block and we found ourselves in the jaws of that highway. The distance from its west end at the creek to the stockyards on the extreme east measured only about half a mile. The whole scene lay unbelievably small and compact. We may refer to my sketch map on page 139 as showing what came to be the general situation in Texan Abilene.

At nearly the same time in June the Seely frame store was completed—the first real store there. Later my brother's small frame land office, where he ruled as the first mayor, sprang into existence just to the north of our house and on the northern extension from Texas Street.

Soon afterward the Texas Cattle Trade, now duly

organized, came in over the Chisholm. Herds had in previous years been driven into the North to be sold here and there at random. The Chisholm Trail into Abilene furnished in 1868 the first definite organized market and solution for Texas cattle and their export problem. The route enabled cattle Texas and the semi-arid Plains to begin a financial prosperity.

Even from the south Kansas border the Trail ran about one hundred and fifty miles by actual line of way. It was to be not only an important trail but a unique trail then in American history. West of the Mississippi, at least, it represented the first historic American-made trail from the South into the North. More beeves by far were to be driven over it, more white men were to be killed by white men and buried along it, more white robbers and white outlaws were to infest it, than doubtless any other American-made trail in our history.

Coursing through a well-grassed territory, with many small mud streams for water, this path adapted itself to holding cattle. Nor did flies afflict the section as badly as other sections. Inevitably before long there hung about the route disastrous diseases like the Spanish fever which would threaten a large drove almost as quickly as one of the prairie fires. Inevitably, too, a herd of steers stood in danger of being "jumped" at any point by lurking thieves, commonly called Jayhawkers, ready to murder drover and cowpuncher.[1]

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[1] The origin and meaning of the word Jayhawker are still disputed. The

The Chisholm Trail, notwithstanding, became at once the great and sole highway for the Texas longhorns in constantly increasing numbers, bringing wealth and power in their train. Its herds averaged from ten to fifteen hundred, with occasionally much larger droves.

Secretary of the Kansas State Historical Society wrote me February 28, 1922: ". . . will say that the meaning . . . is not clear. Up to this time neither the origin of the word nor its meaning can be said to have been settled. Jayhawking was a term used in the war of independence in Texas. It was also used by the Forty-Niners going to California. Along the border in the Civil War it was a term which embraced the soldiers on both sides who made predatory forays into enemy territory."

In the dictionaries: "A member of a band of guerrillas, especially in Kansas and Missouri, before and during the Civil War; hence, an irregular soldier."

We may quote in full from Bartlett's "Dictionary of Americanisms": "A cant name in the Western States for a lawless or other soldier not enlisted; a free-booting, armed man; a guerrilla. *The Leavenworth Conservative* says: 'the term was first applied to Col. Jennings, of New York, and, being a jovial, festive, and lively cuss, his comrades always spoke of him as the Gay Yorker. This expression was afterwards used to designate his men, and in its various travels naturally underwent many changes until at last it crystallized into Jayhawker.' (*N. Y. World*, Jan. 8, 1862.) Proclamation of Gen. James Lane in October, 1861: 'We are soldiers, not thieves or plunderers or Jayhawkers.' Gen. Sheridan, in a dispatch, having spoken of Louisiana banditti, gave much offense to the people of New Orleans. In explanation, the General said: 'The terms Jayhawker and Banditti were employed to distinguish them from the White League, a secret military organization. The term Jayhawker could not be used, for the White League were not plunderers and robbers.' "

In Dr. L. W. Spring's "Kansas" we find: "A more plausible derivation traces the word to a dare-devil Irishman, by the name of Pat Devlin. One morning in the summer of 1856, a neighbor is said to have met him returning from a foraging expedition, laden with spoils. 'Where have you been, Pat?' 'Jayhawking,' was the reply. 'Jayhawking? What is that?' 'Well,' continued the philological bush-ranger, 'in the old country we have a bird called the Jayhawk, which kind o' worries its prey. It seemed to me as I was riding home that this was what I had been doing.' "

The term Jayhawker soon came into popular use on the Plains after the Civil War and denoted Kansans. To Texans it meant ex-soldiers from the Union army who, in armed groups, held up herds, roughly handled or, if necessary, killed the owners, and ran off cattle. In "The Trail Drivers of Texas" a writer, who had actual knowledge of the country then, says: "The Jayhawkers in '66 in southeast Kansas were said to be soldiers mustered out of the Yankee army. They were nothing more than a bunch of cattle rustlers."

In my section of the Plains Jayhawkers meant men who took, stole, timber from Government lands. It signified some kind of plundering or thieving.

Three thousand was the biggest herd thought safe to drive. The usual price per head leaped from a bagatelle to around twenty or twenty-five dollars "in specie" in Abilene. "In specie" signified quite another thing than the less valuable current paper money. As late as 1873, the record sale in "Western Kansas" is said to have registered seven thousand head at thirty dollars. All these figures signalized goodly profits (at least on paper) for stock costing little in Texas, and grass fed as rovers on free public lands, the expense of shelter and grain being eliminated.

To attract the necessary buyers for the Cattle Trade, McCoy conceived of shipping east a carload of buffalo as an advertisement.

The Chisholm Trail expanded in 1868 with cattle herds and outfits resulting, as seen, in shipments that year of perhaps seventy-five thousand beeves. Arrived in the vicinity of the village the many droves unfolded like a Brobdingnagian fan from the Trail, embellishing the prairies with enormous oriflammes of bright colors, beautifying the landscape by thus gayly variegating it. In Texas, in the livestock trade on the Plains, Abilene, soon called the cattle "depot," was becoming the Mecca.

The droves of wild longhorn Texas steers began to wake up the few scattered settlers along streams, and the Texans decidedly waked up the sleepy hamlet. Almost in a twinkling, in 1868, little one-roomed, frame, rude places of business outlined Texas Street, a block from our home. They numbered likely fifteen or twenty that

summer. Small merchants, including Jews, with flimsy, yet high-priced stocks, mainly outfittings, arrived. For the railroad made the spreading of news easy, and men had heard of this new metropolis rising up where cash should be plentiful and life without laws could be without restraint. Independence and money! Nothing promised to be, nor was, simpler than to acquire, in trading or otherwise, the Texan cowboys' unfamiliar "specie" in their leather belts.

In the over-large number of saloons Texan drunkenness and gambling represented the open order day and night. Already the word had also passed along to the unrighteous haunts of the Missouri and Mississippi about the good business in Abilene. A motley crowd of sinful persons slipped in here for the season's opportunities. One could gaze in detachment upon this mutinous humanity. You saw the saloon-keeper garishly dressed, his diamond cluster as large as a hickory nut, not only with his pockets full of money but offering a glad hand and word to everybody. Rivaling such friends in appearance came the gambler, his fingers clammy from cold decks. One beheld the professional "bad man," having no visible means of support except cards, accoutered and welcoming dueling without great provocation. And this gentry was to feed like summer parasites on the luckless cowpuncher and to a less extent on the much rarer, more sane drover.

All the places patronized by Texans had six-shooters handy under counters. For the cowprodders, and some-

times the drovers, to go about fully armed, presumably ready to shoot men on sight, soon grew to be the well-known disposition in this unorganized, humming, little universe. Its life prepared the way for the hair-raising pretensions of the screen theaters with their pseudo pictures of western cowboy existence in the best style of the twentieth century imagination. These cowboys found themselves in surroundings new to them in this hamlet with its hastily assembled collection of saloons and gambling resorts where the armed visitors could carouse and shoot to kill to their hearts' content.

The Texans were very energetic. They rarely walked, accustomed to live in the saddle. Their bronchos went on the gallop. The drovers usually sold out quickly to cut expense. It was a hurry as well as a hurrah. A group and their cowboys would suddenly be gone, only to be succeeded by others of the same variety. Always a hurry and hurrah, punctuated by drunken shouts and pistol shots!

A feverish prosperity had set in at one "lick" in the village. What a new and fearsome spectacle to our civilians! Mixed right into that life in that exiguous space, they, their wives and children became, perforce, an innocent part of it. For, in reality, they were no part of it. Necessity kept them from objecting before this evil scene, this wicked outburst of human nature. To attend strictly to business, as the expression ran, keep mouths shut and sell goods, constituted their sole concern. Their number was added to by immigrants "seep-

ing in" over the railroad, both into Abilene and the countrysides. They opened tiny stores or offices or began to make slim improvements on their land.

By the first of October the Texas Cattle Trade for that season, with its Texans, its merchants, its saloonkeepers, its gamblers, had vanished down the Trail or by train to Kansas City or St. Louis almost as quickly as they had come, leaving behind one or two men killed. The stocks of goods or other equipment, too, disappeared. Vacant, the desolate buildings. Again a very small percentage of the financial "turnover" of the Cattle Trade remained in Abilene in whatever form. But this cash together with the little cash of the newcomers heartened the hamlet, and it settled down to a long, tedious winter in very dull contrast to the summer with its flagrant performances. Sanguine expectations were fanned by money prospects of the next year's prosperous Texan trade. Quiet Abilene had that winter of 1868-9 a resident population of probably one hundred and fifty adults, and not a few frame stores and homes were erected.

The touchstone: the profit that might be realized. For the economic question is, we know, largely at the bottom of emigration and other secular movements. The immigration we have to deal with from this time on came by rail. We have left the wagon immigration behind. Incomers moved on to the Plains now not to push forward civilization, American development, religion, reforms. They came to make a little money or accumulate a little property under hoped-for easier or freer circumstances

in an unobtrusive existence. They wanted to be let alone and to let alone, and a natural place for this was, to their notion, the wide, wild, uninhabited prairies. They commonly expected to move elsewhere when they had got money. Their way of living remained essentially temporary. The large majority could "vamose" on short notice.

The underlying uncertainty about the Plains was emphatic in serious heads. The almost unheard-of conditions, the eccentric climate, a country where little admittedly would grow except summer grasses, and trees and bushes only along the streams, could not but be disturbing to any placid confidence. Nothing had been proven. All was experimental. Things might not work out. Then—a return to the East?—or a push on again to the still more adventurous and distant West? One hated to think of contingencies. What about a drought? Would the Texans, returning next summer, better prepared, more numerous, more dictatorial, "shoot up" Abilene or otherwise make life unendurable for the civilians?

There had been a gamy exhibition of such a threat. Here two naturally irreconcilable camps of people proposed to live huddled together in a space equal to about five city blocks, the one armed and openly disorderly. Was it possible? Could there result anything but a smash-up? Were the inhabitants this winter but drifting into a calamity—destruction? Besides, Indians still fought frequently on the Plains. And an unsuspected terror loomed in the widespread prairie fires which,

backed by the winds or what the residents soon half-jokingly called "gentle zephyrs," could sweep over everything.

So the year 1869 was faced with fortitude mixed with very grave fears. Yet it looked easier to stay than pick up and leave—where? General Grant had been elected President and satisfaction with him as a western man, a military victor and a powerful friend, reposed in the bosoms of the overwhelmingly Republican patriots on the Plains.

CHAPTER V

DROVERS AND COWBOYS

"Will it ever rain?"

"The rain last night turned out to be only a shower."

"The everlasting sun! It has baked the wet ground this morning so that it's already harder than ever."

Here an altogether novel experience for American pioneers! Never before had the race encountered anything like a desert and tried to settle upon it. English, Scotch, Irish or German, they brought no desert traditions, no desert knowledge, to go by. The Government back of them was just as ignorant.

In this brand new country where the sunny climate bred faith, where the winters appeared open, clear and not severe, where no trees, stumps nor stones thwarted agriculture, where the green beauty of sweetly rolling prairies during spring and early summer did much to offset the dead brown of the rest of the year, trials commenced especially to afflict people used to other climatic conditions. The weather, partaking of the nature of a semi-desert, could be capricious, extreme, while the light air, commonly from the southwest, raced habitually along and about, carrying an aerial world of dust. The first boomer could sing in rhythmic prose of "Western

Kansas" whose "delightsome breeze so gently sweeps over the land, bringing health, vigor and the balm of a thousand flowers upon its wings"; but news of tornadoes before long spread.

The settlers soon scolded about the weather. The only region where wind could blow on four sides of a house at the same time! Anything adverse began to be thought of as characteristic of such an alluring but treacherous country with its hard water, its persistent flies and clouds of mosquitoes, its unlovely streams, despairingly muddy. This was roughing it, was it? Life in the woolly West! Yet the immigrants, mainly of the American type, strongly inclined to take things jocularly —to find fun even in adversity.

Dry weather, prairie fires and other dangers came to be regarded as inevitable, yet no one apprehended floods in the desert. Safety from them, at least! But, sure enough, the year 1869 practically opened with a flood that threatened to wipe out Abilene. This was early in June before any of the Texan herds arrived. While the inhabitants stood at loggerheads about the guessed-at degrees of aridity, a second Noah's flood rushed down upon them. Little Mud creek, as if offended by being considered insignificant, sprang into notoriety with a cloudburst. The citizens awoke late one night to find their property being swept away. Much more awful a raging current of water in the dark than in the light of day!

When dawn lifted, they beheld in consternation a

swift sea of angry, muddy water heading for the river. It measured two and a half feet deep and rose rapidly. Already it mounted to door sills. If a house had, by way of exception, a second floor or a loft, the women and children retreated upstairs while husbands tried to reach their stables to save the stock. If but one floor, the floating logs, planks, frameworks, were fished up to the doors as vehicles for flight. Sections of wooden sidewalks for rafts looked like godsends. Yet flight for where? Nowhere except the river, mad, yawning, doomful. Some houses and barns, having been propped up from the ground on rickety bases, moved stubbornly with the current. A wagon or buggy now and then was pushed on by jumps. Families saw horses and cows wading by. Pigs swam along while fowl perched on roofs. Implements, harness, domestic utensils, joined in the watery exodus. Men became separated from their wives, their young ones.

The panic increased. No breakfasts! People found themselves cut off from their cellars, now pools. Children cried for food as the forenoon came on. The water lay a foot deep on many a first floor. If not drowning, must it be starvation?

At last, thank God! the level of the flood halted. The magnificent and faithful Kansas sun shone down. The torrent began to recede. It disappeared quickly. The Plains—superb for drainage! By noon men commenced making their way where streets and sidewalks had been, now lying under a layer of light brown silt. Scantling,

posts, ties, were strung along to indicate thoroughfares.

But another scare followed that night. In the late afternoon the heavens again grew sullen, thunderous. The residents moved to the hills. "Toting" blankets, a little food and many a Bible, they huddled about there in the mud hour after hour to dodge the wrath of Jehovah. They left their homes, stores, property, in the valley with, it seemed, scarce a thought of them. To save their own lives was the thing in mind. Fortunately this storm broke elsewhere, and during the long hours of darkness the inhabitants returned in small groups, venturesomely, faint-heartedly, to their houses. This flood-time passed.

One lucky happening—the water drowned out the prairie dog village! It had enlarged into a labyrinthine nuisance and obstacle for which the wit of man had yet devised no remedy, no method of destruction. Long afterward the dogs were discovered as having been transported by the flood four miles east, down on the river bottom, where they once more began to thrive. There they proceeded to make the valley a desert again. Men tried many a fruitless experiment to destroy this new village. A successful plan was at last hit upon: to stop up the holes with stone and dirt tamped, and employ a watchman to stay on the spot in the day-time to shoot the few dogs that managed to burrow their way to the surface.

The flood capped the climax and left residents convinced that any kind of catastrophe could happen. Floods

in the Desert! What perversity! If they were to be frequent, a sorry mistake had been made in locating Abilene in the flat. This caused a new anxiety.

So the year 1869 began with a decided jolt. But hopeful spirits revived promptly. People soon looked upon the event as an hysterical joke. They didn't mind their losses since they themselves had been saved. For a month it became a kind of pastime to stroll everywhere looking for lost property and jesting about it. The local comment: "How about the droughty Plains *now*? What about aridity? Isn't the rainfall increasing fast?"

And next the dreaded Texans. Their cattle trade came in, extensively advertised. Abilene strove adequately to meet it. The stockyards had been extended and its sidetrack lengthened. A tiny frame railroad station, called depot in those days, now appeared north of the angle of Texas Street, in lieu of the original plank. The town took on dimensions of a little more advanced character.

Along Texas Street were cluttered more business places—saloons being, of course, mostly in evidence. The stores of local men interlocked with those of transient merchants. These buildings were frame, one-room, jerry-built affairs with hardly a cellar. The lumber used often warped badly, being more or less green. The structures stood propped up one or two feet above ground. Each had a front flare on which the owner boldly painted the name of his place—Red Front, Lone Star, Long Horn. It was a wide-open settlement, with no civic organization, no jail, no Court, practically no

attempt at police control. Everybody free to be drunk anywhere, to gamble in public, to shoot to kill!

The one street swarmed with armed cowboys. They drank whisky freely, too freely. They gambled when they had any money left, falling ready victims to the card "sharpers." The idea seemed to be to go back down the Trail "broke." For prostitution also tempted their money belts, since it now began to assert itself as an institution. As there existed no accommodations for this group, it lived somehow in back of drinking resorts, little conspicuous yet except for a flame-colored wrapper seen now and then darting in behind the buildings. Such scarlet hues looked outrageously out of place and obviously damning in a locality where drab ugliness, the raw look of fresh, unpainted lumber, prevailed.

Drovers' Cottage now, in 1869, blossomed out fully as the grandest hotel in the Plains. On its lordly porch strayed or sat lordly Texan drovers, eastern city cattle buyers and commission agents, all exhaling an air of circumambient substantiality. Not to be omitted from this parade were at times leading saloon-keepers, gamblers and individuals known to have killed a white man.

These drovers were, as a type, imposing with their wonderful, flowing mustaches, wide expectorations of tobacco juice, pungent liquor breaths. They formed a hearty, gallant crowd, flush with money and profanity, free about treating, and most sensitive about ideas of personal honor, ideas not always developing in the same unconflicting line. The usual "my word as good as my

bond" distinguished their dealings in the general absence of lawyers, banks and other like facilities for transacting in the Desert any well-regulated business.

It may be easiest to understand what these Texan drovers, the first to be seen abroad as a group, were like by dividing them into three classes. We have glanced at the ones in evidence at Drovers' Cottage. They represented the high-grade Southern cavaliers of the cattle stamp. They met their herds at Abilene, as a rule, by coming over the rail from Kansas City. These men could be counted as gentlemen, gracious, amicable, accommodating, while showy, authoritative, in a rather loud and pompous manner as natural to persons accustomed to shout orders to underlings. For they were ex-slave owners or sons of former slave owners, though white cowboys, not Negroes, became now their help. They appeared candid, outspoken, but hot-headed and very touchy. Their habit being to "boss," to be "bossed" seemed furthest from their experience. Reliable and paying cash, they merited the secular respect freely accorded them.

Such a cattle owner, not highly educated, possessed the southern traits of generosity and hospitality. Most of his business being done by "word of mouth," those breaking their word with him could look for serious personal trouble. This method of dealing became, indeed, necessary in the Desert where unruliness and illiteracy, too, tended to reduce business relations to an elemental basis, sometimes reddened by blood. Much

that could here be readily characterized as scandalous by censorious critics of life might also be traced to post-war conditions. The Plains invited renegades, or Jayhawkers used to gunning, who would not be tolerated where civic populations were more or less dense. Since renegades enforced their modes, good men had to go armed and commit crimes in self-defense.

Those Texan drovers cannot be better described than in the words of McCoy who knew them to the bone in the late 60's (p. 55):

> Fond of a practical joke, always pleased with a good story, and not offended if it was of an immoral character; universal tipplers, but seldom drunkards; cosmopolitan in their loves; in practice, if not in theory, apostles of Victoria Woodhull, but always chivalrously courteous to a modest lady; possessing a strong innate sense of right and wrong, a quick, impulsive temper, great lovers of a horse, and always good riders and good horsemen; always free to spend their money lavishly for such objects or purposes as best please them; very quick to detect an injury or insult, and not slow to avenge it, nor quick to forget it; always ready to help a comrade out of a scrape, full of life and fun; would illy brook rules of restraint, free and easy.

Those proprietors of assets on the hoof had at Abilene, like their cowboys, no public spirit and zealously adapted themselves to the outlaw country and the outlaw rule. Confirmed individualists, they were of an exaggerated strain. Justice posed before them as a private affair, to be "sized up" by their own minds and attended to by their own hands. Both drovers and cowboys

called an unfortunate transaction "bad medicine" and a bad failure "a ripper."

It is significant that the drovers did not curb their help in Abilene. To his drover a cowboy in trouble could hopefully or confidently resort. He could expect, at least, to be shot back down the lonely Trail with a broncho, a blanket, some mouthfuls of food and a little money, to find his way alone to a Texas ranch.

More significantly: many drovers did aid, abet or support the cowboys in defiance of any authorities attempting to keep the village decently habitable for the residents. For it was to be seen whether Abilene should not be predominantly a Texas cattle town and the Plains a cattle country ruled by Texan drovers and other livestock interests. Toward the farm immigration arriving and townsmen acquiring land, the Lone Star men could be counted on as naturally inimical. Trying to farm in this Sahara? Preposterous! No rain. Farming would injure, destroy, the virgin prairies for grazing. Plowing, fencing, other improvements, would make weeds and drive off herds from the free public range. The damage would have been done to the all-important cattle industry even when the so-called farmers got hungry, as considered certain. Most of those taking up land were not farmers, but speculators on the rise in land values which would only be due to the Cattle Trade. Though these people, composed of village men, women and eastern absentees, made slight improvements, this would lead to spoiling the prairies. The movement should be

stopped. The settlers should "light out," be scared out. The Texas Cattle Trade alone furnished business for Abilene, for the Desert. The landowners were parasites, and parasites deserve no consideration.

This formed the logical reasoning of the Texan drovers. They regarded themselves as the only genuine hope of the country. Its use rightfully belonged to them. Were not the cowboys playing their conscious or unconscious part in a just, effective remonstrance and warning by alarming the townsmen and farmers who stood in the way? If the immigrants did not like it, they should "vamose" and tell the public to keep out. It indicated the nature of the conflict looming before Abilene and the Plains.

Contrasted with this outstanding class of drovers then in Abilene appeared the plain, quiet, modest Texan stockmen who did not take to the expensive existence at Drovers' Cottage nor to Texas Street life. They had nearly all been in the war. Their ranch life, at any rate, had hindered their education and the development of social breeding. Not at all quarrelsome, not given to much talk, they showed themselves as cautious, kindly, and did business satisfactorily in an unassuming, fair way. Sometimes their wives joined them here, coming over the railroad. These were of the same kind of domestic ranch or home bodies, simply dressed, unobtrusive, very likable.

In "betwixt and between" these two classes of drovers ranged what we may designate as a middle class, of an

uncertain or frankly doubtful type in different fashions. These may have been refractory cowboys who had succeeded in becoming drovers; they might have to be watched; Texas Street at its worst was congenial to them; they aspired in many instances to be among the Drovers' Cottage lords. Unlike the other two groups they wore pistols or had pistols handy. They carried money in belts next to their skins. They kept awake to the dangers of being robbed or of needing otherwise to shoot. Their special example encouraged the cowboys in wildness.[1]

And now as to that American bravo in adventure in his original, savage state at Abilene—the cowboy!

The intimidating cowpunchers there were the first to be recognized in the United States as a very distinct breed—the prototypes. Naturally, you would have found many not reckless, not "wild and woolly and hard to curry."[2] But these passed by hastily, unnoticed, in Abilene. The startling species became its known and excluding type.

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[1] One day one of these drovers, who had told me he would show me something wonderful, took me into a room, locked the door and, putting aside his pistols, began to strip. I was scared. Out he whipped a black-looking snake in the form of a belt from around his waist under his shirt, and then, scattered over the floor, lay two thousand dollars in gold pieces. I had never seen gold money and it resembled a dazzling display of diamonds to me. He told me not to say anything about it until he had been gone a week. To carry wealth in this wise was customary.

[2] As to the familiar "wild and woolly," J. N. Byler says in "The Trail Drivers of Texas": "When we reached Kansas we usually found plenty of buffalo. When these animals were disturbed they would begin to travel northward. That is where the expression 'wild and woolly' originated. When the boys reached Abi ene or some other Kansas town, they were usually long-haired and needed a barber's attention, as there were no barbers on the trail. Upon being asked how they got there, they would sing out: 'Come the Chisholm Trail with the buffalo wild and woolly!'" (Vol. I, p. 99.)

This rowdy cowboy there—to enter into a *generalized* description—seemed rather young than old. He knew little else than about cattle and cattle ponies. He looked lean and hungry, yet hardy while in action. Poorly nourished on cattle camp rations and with no notions, of course, as to sanitary habits, he was liable to deteriorate early. He relied on whisky, backed up by youthfulness, to win a return to health, and the decision between life and death came, as a rule, speedily. Either he reacted successfully to fire-water or "bit the dust fer keeps," a "goner," and was promptly chucked into the loam. The severe lot, mishaps, accidents of his calling made life all the more hazardous. So when he encountered civilization at length at Abilene, he had plenty of excuse to go "the limit." He could be said not to read, write nor "figger" —at least much. He had little breeding, no knowledge of nor respect for law, religion or God. Comparatively gross, vulgar, obscene, he made slang and profanity his language. Decent homes, decent women, appeared seldom to have come in his way. He smoked, "chawed," drank "poison" whisky. He shot and knifed pretty well, his brace of pistols and bowie knife in their leather cases being his constant toys.

His home, the saddle. His personal equipment meant distinctively his quirt, his lasso and other equine trappings. His bed-chamber spread out under the broad sky. No tent had he to bother about. His food consisted largely of corn bread (or pones) and "sow belly" (mast-fed bacon), liquefied by heady coffee lacking sugar and

milk. No fresh beef, no vegetables; his stove, a hole in the ground, if no "chuck" wagon along. His meals were cooked in a camp skillet and "et" mainly with a pocket-knife which took the place, one may say, of table knives, forks, spoons, plates. The water often so muddy it had to be "chewed!"

The steer-sticker at Abilene often wore a thick, colored woolen shirt. His other safeguards from the weather comprised a pair of heavy blankets and a soldier overcoat. He used rawhide for twine, thread, pins and nails. With it he did his slight tinkering and mending. Buckskin took the place of cloth. Coming from the dusty Trail and the hard cattle drive, there was little of the picturesque about him until the Abilene stores took him in hand. When paid off here for the season, he outfitted himself with weapons and saddlery, suits more or less of buckskin, stout corduroy pants without "gallows," a new leather belt for his armed waist, a sombrero. He shed frequently his long-legged stogy boots in town for skin-tight, high, kid boots with high heels, the Lone Star glaring in his boot tops. He shambled as he walked, due not only to his heels but to his habit of being in the saddle. When on his feet he bent forward somewhat like an old man, and altogether gave evidence of being loose-jointed and wabbling. His large spurs jingled loudly, suggesting fatality like a rattlesnake's rattling. A bandana kerchief was apt to swing down low from his neck, and the leather fringes of his garments danced to the tune of his spurs.

This cowboy's personal get-up looked to be partly a copy of the exalted Spanish or Mexican. It led one to think of Cortes and Pizzarro. In his array and existence he represented in Abilene a foreigner, mainly a composite of hidalgo, bullfighter and "greaser," displaying usually the Lone Star of Texas as his crest, seen only on his star-topped boots.

Not a drunkard, he none the less gulped his liquor straight as then the custom among "real" men. This added to his fieriness of temper and promptness to quarrel. He was no man to argue with, appearing ready to shock a dispute by a revolver shot. But he stood firmly as a good partner, on hand to avenge a friend at the risk of his own existence, as free, too, about his money as his oaths. Brave to arrant recklessness, he held his life as apparently cheaper than that of his pony or a steer.

The three could not have been more akin. The Texas longhorn steer [1] was likewise "ornery" and the broncho

[1] It has been claimed, by some present-day writers who were not on the ground there, that Texas cows were marketed freely at Abilene, this being naïvely inferred from the term cowboy. In the 1860's and earlier in Texas, it appears that cowhands became the word first employed. When it was seen that mere and much cheaper lads could often tend cattle, the term changed into cowboys. This grew to be the general word used in Abilene and later throughout the United States, though men were hired and all kinds of cattle herded. A man looking after steers was still called cowboy.

According to dictionaries, cow means always a female. The aim of the Texas cattle industry in Abilene being to market animals for immediate butchery, it is evident that cows would not be driven, except in exceptional cases, from Texas several hundred miles for this purpose. Owners needed cows back home for breeding. Hence the typical animal shipped from Abilene was the famous Texas longhorn steer, the word meaning precisely what it said, and pictured and advertised as such in cattle journals. Cattlemen of that day described such livestock as steers or beeves or cattle, not cows. This can be seen in McCoy's book and in "The Trail Drivers of Texas" in its accounts of Texas cattle life in the 1860's. McCoy wrote: "Droves are usually largely composed of what are termed 'beeves,' that is, a steer four years old or older."

equally tempestuous. This yellowish steer, branded on the flank with the owner's brand, stood in a class by himself. Used to brutality, he could be relied on to meet it with a wildness that bordered on ferocity. His dramatic propensities had developed into uncertainty and excess. He snorted, bawled, pawed the ground. "Ornery, you bet!" He brandished long, wicked horns, ready to bluff or gore. But the most discouraging thing about him: he was hard to fatten. The broncho or mustang came, like the longhorn, of a Spanish origin, being at first often referred to as Spanish pony. He might be gayly calico-colored and clock-eyed. This small, sinewy, vicious gelding bit with one end and kicked with the other, bucked and ran away, likely with his rope bridle. He bore an immense, heavy saddle, cinched cruelly tight, to defeat which operation he swelled up big. Accustomed to grass, he was disposed to starve rather than eat grain.

The cowboy's salary during the season ran from fifteen to twenty dollars a month "in specie." But there was to be figured in his meager, unwholesome "keep" while on the Trail and elsewhere in cattle service. Carrying his money in a lump he loped from camp to town, and after being outfitted he got his mustache "set" in an annual barbering up.

I never saw nor heard of a drove of Texas cows being marketed in Abilene. To call all kinds of cattle by this word is a later and loose or inaccurate usage.

The word gun for all kind of shooting weapons has likewise come into later misuse. Gun, meaning pistol, is a perversion. The characteristic weapon in Abilene was the six-shooter as observed in Brewer's account (our p. 280).

Then he was apt to canter carelessly, guilelessly, into a glorious round-up of debauchery. Hard to snaffle! Whoop-ee! Making himself still more unguarded by poor whisky, he fell a very easy mark to the eastern distributers of sin whom, as pointed out, he now and here at Abilene met for the first time. "Plumb locoed!" Perhaps he tried to "shoot up" a place or somebody. His money gone after a week, he took the Trail on his mustang back south, to return next summer if alive. He thought little of going on the long journey alone through that lariat wilderness, gambling on his chances with bad weather and bad men.

To the credit of these first cowboys should be placed a wiry endurance under physical hard luck, and also courage. It was distinctly courage behind a six-shooter. They knew little about resorting to fists in altercations. In such a procedure they became quite helpless. They understood better that honor, revenge, meant shooting first—getting the "drop." They had the courage of not hesitating much about killing their man. That was the rule, the white man's only law, in this Desert, as they knew it. And they had no great compunctions about shooting suddenly through a window or masked behind a door or not from in front. The later marshals in Abilene feared this in cowboys more than anything. To guard against it Marshal Tom Smith rode or walked in the middle of Texas Street and Marshal Wild Bill kept his back to some wall.

No cowboy songs resounded in Abilene in that day.

The breed remained too new to have given birth to poets. Education being what it was, this occasions no surprise. Since then many cowboy songs have come into popularity, some of them purporting to be "old originals" with the Chisholm Trail for their themes. The stanzas are endless, often incoherent, tacked together, and the texts vary. The following are perhaps best known.

THE OLD CHISHOLM TRAIL

Come gather round, ye cowboys, and listen to my tale,
And I'll tell you a story of the old Chisholm Trail.

Chorus: With a coma ti yi yippi, yippi-i-i-i,
And a coma ti yippi, yipp-i.

On a ten-dollar horse and a forty dollar saddle,
I come up from the Panhandle where I purchased Texas cattle.

My hoss throwed me off, jest like I was a bird,
He throwed me off near the 2-U herd.

Last time I saw him he was goin' on the level,
A-kickin' up his heels an' a-runnin' like the devil!

As soon as I recovered from that damned hard jolt,
I got a job a-punchin' for old man Bolt.

Old man Bolt was a fine old man,
There always would be whisky wherever he'd land.

'Twas early in the morning of October twenty-third
When we started up the trail with the 2-U herd.

I woke up one morning on the old Chisholm Trail,
A rope in my hand, and a cow by the tail.

Crippled my hoss, an' I don't know how,
A-ropin' at the horns of a 2-U cow.

It's cloudy in the West, an' lookin' like rain,
An' my damned old slicker's in the wagon again.

No chaps, no slicker, an' a-pourin' down rain,
I swear, by God, I'll never night-herd again.

I was on a herd one night when the leader broke the ranks,
I hit my hoss on the shoulders an' spurred him in the flanks.

I popped my foot in the stirrup, an' gave a little yell;
The tail cattle broke, an' the leader went to Hell.

The wind began to blow, an' the rain began to fall;
An' hit looked, by grab, like we was goin' ter lose 'em all.

My feet in the stirrups, an' my rump in the saddle,
I hung an' I rattled with them long-horn cattle.

We didn't give a damn if they never did stop,
We'd ride along like an eight-day clock.

Feet in the stirrups, an' hands on the horn,
Best damned cowboys ever was born!

We herded an' we hollored an' we done very well,
Till the Boss said, "Boys, let 'em go to Hell!"

We all hit town, an' we hit her on the fly,
We bedded down the cattle on a hill near by.

Then we rounded 'em up, an' we put 'em in the cars,
An' that was the end of the "bar-C-bars."

I went to the Boss to draw my roll;
He had me figgered nine dollars in the hole!

I'll sell my outfit as soon as I can!
I won't punch cattle for no damned man!

I went to the wagon to get my roll,
I'm a-goin' back to Texas, dad burn my soul!

I'm on my best hoss, an' I'm goin' on the run,
I'm the quickest shootin' cowboy that ever pulled a gun.

With my rump in the saddle, an' my head in the sky,
I'll quit punchin' cows in the sweet by an' by!

The cowboy's life on the Chisholm Trail in the late 60's advertised itself as one of agitation, roughing it, danger and exposure in a climate of sudden, unsparing waywardness. The professional moralist can lament over that desolate, derelict type of man, condemned to a week or two in the year for reveling in civilization where he found only vices. Poor devil! And a very tough devil was he! [1]

But for popular fiction and the stage there has developed from this Texas cowboy at Abilene (1867 to 1872) our chief hero of modern American romance. Many heroes of legendary adventure in the Old World, like the Robin Hoods, figure partly as bandits with a simplified sense of resistance to public tyranny. This

[1] Nothing can be more degrading, as already noted, than Emerson Hough's presentation of Texans in Abilene in "North of 36." Texans, in loudly acclaiming Hough as accurate, witlessly celebrating themselves and their ancestors in this infamy, are likewise subjects for the moralist to despair over.

phase appears lacking in our original cowboy type whose distinguishing traits seem to have been his dashing horse-back- and lasso-skill, uncouthness from being more with cattle than with humans, a harsh-skinned pluck in facing outdoor hardships, and a crude, injudicious valor with pistol in righting individual wrongs.

CHAPTER VI

THE BULL'S HEAD

Brisk and bustling!

Homes and business places among the Abilene civilians were going up, always of a little better kind. The idea of permanency sprouted. Ready cash circulated as not so much of a novelty. People acquired land claims, also some town lots, with avidity.

Yet newcomers inquired: Where a school, where a church? The children ran loose, doing errands and loafing in the only highway—the shameless Texas Street. What was sure to become of them? This meant a bad handicap before the land and town lot agents when using their best efforts to persuade immigrants to "locate." It became sorely evident to parents that their offspring should not grow up like the ignorant and shocking cowboys seen on every hand. Playing in and around the street with its saloons, its degenerate females, its ruffians breaking out now and then into a tumult, paved the way certainly to that hell which roared in the popular mind.

I had been the first school child. The previous winter I went to a school in a log cabin on Mud creek, on a

farm a half-mile south. It was for the children of a worthy pioneer family who admitted me out of courtesy as the outsider from the village. But with the new families, many boys and girls came into town. While the need of keeping them off the street looked greater in summer during the demoralizing cattle trade, they would learn nothing except roughness and toughness also in winter if not penned up indoors and made to study "a bit."

Now that existence on the Plains began to be thought of as likely to continue somehow, the necessity of a school looked urgent in this summer of 1869. So a schoolhouse was conveniently located adjacent to Texas Street. It turned out to be a small, one-story structure of soft limestone quarried from the river cliffs. It opened its doors to pupils that September and all the juveniles from infants to adolescents were lassoed into this corral of instruction. We went to and from it unconcernedly through Texas Street—the only life we knew.

A movement at the same time had been quietly under way for a church. Though the general atmosphere breathed on the Plains was non-religious, a couple of pioneers on the river joined with three or four moving spirits in the village and formed a religious group. Their women, other women, hankered to hear hymns once more that brought pleasantly and fortifyingly to mind the days of their youth; and church and Sunday school, too, would be a restraining example for the young.

Should not the young begin to learn something of those spiritual responsibilities of life and death?

As a majority of the men thus gathered together were Baptists, they decided on a Baptist church which should serve as a community organization, persons of any faith or no faith being welcome. The seven members with others erected a frame building a block east of the school and likewise right next to Texas Street whose flames of iniquity, however, would afford warnings of perdition. The church was painted a dull, lead color which very well responded to its main message of doom. These inhabitants early deemed this hue as the most practicable in a climate rough on colors. The community, hitherto only anxious about its property and getting ahead financially, now visibly showed an anxiety about the salvation of their souls and the reclamation of their hopefuls.

The few church families with a very liberal attitude about formal religion made it a duty to be present at services and thus try to hold up ideas for higher things. Yet this now was to them something of a bitter pill. The prescription of theology handed out by the earnest clergymen could be described as purgative. They insisted on violent doses of hell fire, everlasting punishment, infant damnation, with supreme confidence before a small Sunday congregation beset by nightmares and privations during week days. My family and others felt dubious about having to meet this Sabbath dosage of death and destruction, and often vowed, on returning, that they could not stand it. They continued to go as

the best thing. Perhaps thirty adults usually attended.

A large majority of the people did not do so, not from any particular hostility, but because they didn't have the habit of "working much" at religion. They would say they had enough trouble week days without going to church on the seventh. The Sabbath was found by them handy to drive into the country, run errands. Jehovah and immortality entered little into their scheme of life, though they could be called good people in the main, trying to treat their own little world about right. They often met the religious proposition half-way by offering up a vicarious sacrifice in the form of sending their children to Sunday school.

The outright deriders talked out.

"To go to church an' be told you was a miser'ble worm of the dust? If a feller called me that outside church, I'd lick him anywheres. It seems like a feller can call you anything in a pulpit an' it has to go down. But me—I couldn't sit there an' have a feller callin' me names an' cussin' me, an' me have to take it. An' he bein' hired to do it. How can a miser'ble worm be expected to buck life on the Plains? God! It would take the nerve plum' out of a feller. Let 'em as wants to, go. No objections." But the church filled a decided need and did good, strengthening the Puritan strain.

To get away from Texas Street fracases and the range of bullets, the civilian village began to creep over north of the railroad track. There was no end of room there, away from the cramped-up situation on that street; and

also the iron track answered as a sort of defense from the Hades on the south. For everybody considered the Texas Cattle Trade a lasting institution in Abilene and on the Plains if the country "held out." The Texas business grew more profitable. The transient proprietors and associates in the profits on Texas Street made plans to return yearly. The Texans were free buyers with cash down, paying any prices, being not so "low down" as to quibble. A dollar to them looked like nothing, while credit and economy signified everything to the northern residents and settlers. Good times made good feeling so far as concerned trade.

But life in that street remained repellent, subject as it also was to explosions. Nothing effective to control or oppose it! Yet this lucky feature: the Texan did not molest nor insult individual citizens. Their women and children were never approached, never bothered. Our home stood, as seen, right between the jaws of Texas Street, and no cowboy ever entered the yard nor paid the slightest heed there to members in our household. Crazily drunk, they raced past, filling the air with pistol shots and curses, while our doors stood always open or unlocked whether the inmates were present or not. No looters nor thieves, the Texans! Except for the haphazard apprehensiveness as to a sudden shooting scrape, so-called, women and children marketed tranquilly in Texas Street next door to saloons.

The powder magazine, however, stood there and local men, still trying to be absorbed in their personal

affairs, stepped about gingerly, fearing a daily blow-up. A cowboy would ride his broncho into a saloon and pull his pistol, whereupon business ceased thereabouts for the time being. A man was drinking at a bar. Somebody fired in from the outside. The bullet hit him in the mouth, killing him instantly. Bullets would come singing over our house and each person would duck low until they passed. When you heard one or two shots, you waited breathlessly for a third. A third shot meant a death on Texas Street.

In the latter part of this summer of 1869, the tension tightened and continued some time as an ugly threat. It was due to an odd mid-Victorian occurrence, if such an association of things can be imagined by the reader. The Bull's Head saloon affair provided a curious illustration of the diverse difficulties and risks.

That proprietor brought matters unwittingly to what looked like a bloody head. He had the front flare of his building repainted. Spread scross the surface appeared naïvely limned a big red bull in all its grandeur as depicted in livestock journals. The action followed a recent series of specific Texan performances, escapades, that had caused the citizens to tremble about the result.

The painting produced an unexpected effect on them. Though as far from any knowledge of art or desire for it as any people could well be, the picture made them instinctively revolt. Once again a baffling question almost as old as humanity! Bulls were frequently driven or led

through the town without causing anybody a moment's thought, much less an objection, yet the image on that saloon stunned. It met with denunciations as immoral, degrading, hateful. And this in a cattle country whose present and future depended on stock breeding! While no one could have lucidly argued why, or unraveled the twisted skeins existing between reality and fancy, an unreasoned but genuine feeling sprang up in every civilian breast against the crude saloon product of the imagination or, rather, pictured actuality. Bulls did breed before the public in that open "God's country," yet man with a brush was ignoble if he reproduced in paint the all-desired virility. The natural human cry: Nature is good, Art—indecent!

So influential citizens, suddenly possessed of the thin-skinned susceptibilities of their mid-Victorian epoch, could not overlook the defiant animal on the Bull's Head. It must be considered an insult to the good women of the town, a shame in plain sight of children. To let the bull stand unobjected to or forbidden was held to be an outright "knuckling under" to the Texans and to open the full road to unsupportable transgressions.

Reflecting this sentiment a becoming protest went forth to the proprietor. The latter declined to interest himself. An informal committee of citizens was sent to argue the matter and assume a sterner but tactful tone. The owner asked,

"What have I done? What's the kick? To paint a bull not the 'old fruit'[1] is nonsense. Why git ticklish about this particular feller when all the other bulls in the world can be seen as God made 'em? I ain't goin' to be made a fool of. An' I ain't no quitter neither!" The committee was "consigned" to a familiar place hotter than the Plains in August.

This serious rebuff led someone to ascertain that the Bull's Head man had a family in the Lone Star State. Ah, here the proper cue! The Texan was approached with the domestic argument:

"Major, you have a wife and children. You know well enough about the modesty of the one—and the state of innocence required for the others. Here are the women and the little boys and girls of our town. It is difficult—delicate—delicate as 'hair in the butter,' as you Texans say. We aren't responsible for it, but here it is. Think of your wife and children. Won't you paint out this animal? There are plenty of effective signs you can use!"

But the Bull's Head stood firm:

"Bein' married an' a dad—that's all very well. But it's a matter of principle. I won't go back on my principles. I'm a free American citizen an' I understand I have certain inalienable rights. One of 'em is to do as I please with my property. If I can't, what's the use of ownin' any? I'd like to see *any* man, *any* town, make me

[1] The most popular Texan slang expression. It signified the genuine article or a genuine person.

change a sign on my building or anything else that's open an' above board, truthful an' for my legitimate occupation. I want to make it plain: I'm not to be dictated to by the mealy-mouthed or scared off the trail by girly fellers."

After a fortnight of uncertainty, everybody fearing to touch off a match which could light a conflagration, enough persuasion or influence was somehow exerted upon the Bull's Head to get the offending feature of the bull painted out. This denaturing operation, however, left the outline still sketched to view.

In such a compromise the affair wilted away under its heat. Each side claimed a victory in the mutilated animal; each side rested on its half-withered laurels. An even contest foretelling nothing as to the final outcome! The civilians were left on tenterhooks. Would the Texans at pistol points sooner or later take possession of Abilene, the county, the Desert, expelling the Yanks? Or would the Yanks drive out the Johnny Rebs with all the profitable trade and prosperity they brought, thus depriving the region of its good fortune and fame? Which should conquer—southern longhorn or northern shorthorn, grass fed or grain fed, grazer or feeder, raw bred or market beef, the saddle or the plow, Texas Street or the home?

The end at Abilene or on the Plains could not be forever deferred. The wrong combination of a drunken cowboy, a pistol shot, the killing of a civilian, might any

day bring on a fateful war. Incidents like the following may be detailed.

One morning you might have observed a thin, sallow puncher walking along the street in his full regalia. His buckskin suit is heavily fringed in like material. His trousers are tucked in his top boots, revealing the Lone Star. Their high, narrow heels tilt him forward, his knees widely crooked out like any saddle stockman's. Huge spurs, his tread, resound on the walk as he steps along its abrupt or undulating surfaces. He is nonchalantly smoking a "*se*gar" while giving his quirt cracks.

He clatters ahead till he enters to inquire about mail. He stoops down suddenly at the small, low window of the post-office.

"Anything fer me?"

"What's the name?"

"Jim."

"Jim who?"

"Cheese it, young feller. Everybody knows me. Air ye tryin' to be ornery? I don't want no mustang airs. I want my *mail*—you *hear*?"

A jingling hunch of the be-pistoled hips like the warning of a rattler! The clerk, cleverly yet nervously, reaches for an enveloped circular from a Kansas City whisky house, scribbles on it an undecipherable name beginning with Jim, sticks on a canceled postage stamp, hands it out in a grave bluff, and Jim, who cannot read,

takes a notion to stalk away satisfied. He had got his mail.

This, before a Government official, was far from reassuring. It enforced the idea of an organized town authority, for the Bull's Head showed that a move needed to be made. Propose to meet force by force? A necessity to be shuddered over. But two or three men had lately been killed and some wounded.

The residents must quit thinking of themselves as merely individuals, and unite in a corporate existence, a legalized union, for self-defense. The time had passed for each one to be for himself, leaving the others to the Devil, a personage considered especially busy in Abilene. There were not only the citizens and homes to protect, but a church and a school would be other hostages to fortune. Should they be at the complete mercy of whisky and six-shooters? The only law and order officer: the sheriff of the county, a merchant who depended on deputies or constables. One or two of them tried their hand on quelling disturbances, but could not succeed. They appeared unconstituted for this peculiar and alarming task. They were scared off or scared. The sheriff properly concluded it did not enter into the line of his county duties to police the town.

A petition signed by forty-three residents "prayed" for the incorporation of Abilene and on September 3, 1869, a city of the third class came into being here as shown by the following document:

STATE OF KANSAS, }
COUNTY OF DICKINSON. } ss.:

I, City Clerk of Abilene, Kansas, do hereby certify that I have examined the first city records of this city and find that its first organization as a community under the law was on the 3d day of September, 1869, when, by an order of the Probate Court, Cyrus Kilgore, Probate Judge, upon a petition presented to said Court by John H. Mahan as attorney, said petition carrying the names of forty-three residents of Abilene praying for incorporation, the said Court granted the prayer of the petitioners and Abilene on that date became a city of the third class;

AND further do I find from said official city records that the Court also duly appointed J. B. Shane, T. C. Henry, Thomas Shearan, T. F. Hersey and J. G. McCoy as Trustees of the city to act until their successors should be elected; and that this Board of Trustees chose T. C. Henry as Chairman of the Board whereupon he presided at its meetings, becoming in effect, the first mayor or ex officio mayor of the city, which duties he carried out until an election was held in the spring of 1871 on the date of April 3d, 1871.

AND further do I find from said city records that Thomas J. Smith was appointed (as marshal) by said Henry as mayor on the 4th day of June, 1870.

M. E. Calkins,
City Clerk of Abilene, Kansas.

Sworn to before me this
9th day of Oct., 1924.
J. A. Graves,
NOTARY PUBLIC.
My Commission Expires January 11, 1928.

In this way my brother became mayor of the worst town in America, the first of its cattle kind, and by this

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Theodore C. Henry, first mayor of Abilene (1869-1871) when twenty-eight, and later Wheat King. Discoverer, in 1871, of winter wheat raising on the Plains, thereby leading to its transformation from a desert into a farming empire. Photograph taken at the time.

time beginning to be known as such in the nation. McCoy and Hersey admittedly figured as the fathers of Abilene, and Shane, a valiant Kentuckian, a crippled Union soldier, was Henry's land office partner. My brother was twenty-eight years old. He had had no experience with this sort of thing. Of a Scotch-Irish strain, he was a fighter, though not with firearms nor fists. He disliked his situation, he dreaded it. The thankless job might be fatal.

The trouble lay not only with the Texans, a situation bad enough, but with their evil associates—armed saloonkeepers, gamblers, confidence men, assassins, attracted from all directions and often with private grudges to settle, feuds to follow up. Out here they exhibited themselves as pernicious, sinister. Yet they were not openly obstreperous like the cowboys, for they came from cities, accustomed there to municipal rule, whereas the Texans came from no-man's land.

The close of that cattle season being now fortunately about at hand, nothing could be done as to conquering the town until next year. June seemed happily far off.

CHAPTER VII

PESSIMISTS

On the Plains the pessimists might greet you with, "Looks fine for a drought." The optimists, "Looks rainy."

The latter might say: "Pessimists like the country because they don't want anybody to have anything and don't want anything because of the bother of looking after it." The pessimists might say: "Optimists want to sell out because they pretend they are tired of prosperity and profits."

In the Abilene community, like other communities in the Desert, you found a remarkable diversity of human beings. There were, of course, three or four bellwethers who took initiatives. The rest followed. This following may be looked at as consisting of two grades. There could be found the average middle class of a village of that time, fairly industrious, substantial, dependable; fairly educated as in that day; a middling folk. They did not measure up to the similar class of our period whose circumstances are much better in our much more advanced epoch. Education in the 1860's, as stated, didn't rank with what it is to-day. Men on the Plains then went forward if the way seemed moderately cer-

tain. They engaged generally in businesses which they had to learn. They saw an opening and took their chances with it. Amid all the discouragements the belief was held, among them, that if you owned or built up anything, it could be disposed of at a profit. Had not everything in America risen in value?

The other and lower grade of people drifted in. No one knew when they arrived. Suddenly they stood there, making themselves at home. They did odd jobs, the heavy or dirty work, and lived anyhow, their poverty unmistakable. But they were desirable as filling up the empty Desert. Many of them moved out on land and survived with varying degrees of success in the heat and burden of those times.

The new arrivals, being of different stripes from the majority of the original wagon pioneers, could be estimated, on the whole, as ever of a more advanced quality. Like the first settlers, they had had the spunk to come West, daring to try to improve their conditions, showing, at least, imagination and will-power for this courageous change.

The homes in town continued to be usually of one-room, though buildings of four rooms, lathed and plastered, commenced to be familiar sights. No place in the village or countrysides seemed too small or too shorn of suitable conveniences to house a roaming stranger for a night. If of a single room, blankets or cloths were stretched across the space to curtain off sleeping arrangements. Men, women and children hastily undressed and

dressed in a proximity as close as that in a prairie "schooner" or a Pullman. The slight washing of face and hands took place out at the well. Bathing the body then, almost anywhere in the world, meant a rare performance. People claimed to be afraid of being made sick or too tender. Whether payment resulted for accommodations apparently mattered little. All realized they might need a return of hospitality when roving wide and far in that solitude of the West.

Likely three or four hundred adults were residents of the cattle capital in the winter of 1869-70. Additional buildings sheltered this increase. Frame erections of every size—except large!—and of every shape as if out of a nightmare! The village was ragged in appearance, incomplete anywhere, altogether unlovely, with facilities sadly lacking. New streets became faintly indicated as opening forth into the naked prairie infinity. Although immigrants "seeped" in, larger in number, better in rank and with a little more of the looked-for "spondulics," the cold season, in contrast to the summer time, had descended again on a dead hamlet. Not much to do. No fall farming. Few livestock to be kept along. Plenty of time for loafing or trifling over this and that; doing chores.

A dull winter! No entertainments. No social intercourse. The people were strangers to one another in a strange land. Sometimes they dared to nod back and forth, but usually they just looked at you. You could meet the daily passenger train, stare at any new land-

seekers, see the mail bag tossed off into the ditch, wonder if anything happened back in civilization. The few who could afford a daily paper read mainly, out of curiosity, the cattle market reports. Not interested in the grain and other markets. Nothing to sell and export, not even Texas steers. People scrimped and pinched to get along—to hold out till the next cattle season.

But everyone appeared rich in acreage acquired for a trifle,—a section of land (six hundred and forty acres), half section, quarter section,—only it wouldn't raise anything for them. It was, however, something to talk about and dispose of to incomers. Trying to make trades with them represented the one live activity. Every local person thought he or she owned the prettiest tract in America. Each had all the land he or she could "carry." Easy was it to get a dugout dug or a shack built and the soil scratched for a garden or a small, thin spring crop. The seductive prairies encouraged acquaintance like all sirens with doubtful reputations. Could such smooth land, so handy to till, self-draining, unruffled and unrumpled by stumps and stones, prove disastrous? Would a kindly Providence thus entice people to their ruin? Who could think it, in spite of the facts staring one in the face?

So land agents began this winter to be a feature. Those who could own a spanking team proudly dashed about the village and over the prairies with customers in tow. They could point with pride to the big stockyards, the magisterial Drovers' Cottage, the church, the school.

The Plains, in its eastern part, was being dotted by timid improvements, barely enough to satisfy the slack requirements for acquiring title. McCoy speaks of that countryside: "In every direction over the county, the farmers could be seen emerging from their 'dugouts'—mere hovels of dirt built in the bank of some ravine." (P. 204.) Another witness: ". . . grangers who lived in dugouts, a square hole in the ground or on the side of a bluff, with timber placed across and covered with dirt."

The peacefulness of this uneventful winter in Abilene was characterized by suspense about the next summer. The returning Texans—would they not be "mighty riled up" when finding a town government, trustees and a mayor? Who could beard the Lone Star ruffians in this, their stronghold? Mayor Henry, being a practical farmer and a land agent, concerned over agricultural values and prospects, realized more keenly the profound contention arising between homesteads and longhorns than those who merely saw Texas Street. He knew that the Texas Cattle Trade would fundamentally antagonize the farm ideas which he and others vaguely, hesitatingly, propagated. The problem: to find the best way to upbuild this West. If the country were compelled by Nature to be a semi-barbarous livestock province, of what use bothering about little agricultural towns only to see them buried, like ancient cities, under the drifting dirt and sands?

So far the Southern drover, in his growing supremacy, had looked negligently on the half-hearted program of

cutting up some of the prairies into small rectangles to make homes for grangers. Fencing? The steers would break it down. Very rash of people from the East who didn't know the West! It was swindling immigrants who would soon find it out. They would starve. Ranches, stock ranches, not farms, might be opened up, but nothing more in the way of country settlement. As nearly the whole territory lay high, could anyone honestly claim it as ground profitable to till? The Lone Star State should practically annex the great central Plains of the United States in a business proposition intended to be exclusive and overwhelming.

Yes, "who will yank the Texan magnates next summer by their goatees and lick their cowboys? Show us the man!"

Naturally, the population did include a sprinkling of bearded prophets, original characters, clever with their tongues. Pessimists! These seers had "oodles" of time to meet trains, stand on the streets and snicker on the sly at the deluded new farmers being "soft-soaped an' took in." Agriculturalists came on a wild-goose chase out here. Droughts, prairies fires, would soon settle their hash. The Texans would shoot any marshal who could be found. They made the town. They were making the country between the Missouri and the Rockies. Let them have it all.

This irresponsible type of village gentry often meant no more than poking fun by seeming more sage and, therefore, more skeptical than their neighbors. They

could be called cracker barrel wags or saloon wits; but who could say confidently that they were not right? Like all such people, they apparently stood in their own light by "talking down" local interests. But any land they had to sell or trade was mortgaged up to the hilt, and they could leave at any time without loss and meanwhile afford the satisfaction of being "smart Alecks."

They provided, at any rate, some of the much-needed laughter for the metropolis. Their quips would be quietly quoted and joked over, yet considerably believed in by apprehensive or timorous souls. For amusement was eagerly grasped after. Both cutting and gleeful remarks about the climate, the woeful look of farm operations, citizens who had likely been chased out of the East, the elusive dollar, the ridiculous way women dressed, spread about like the "gentle zephyrs." It appeared better than no fun in this isolated village where lives became disposed to wear down to the bone.

The language, as may well be judged, shared accurately in the effects of the tusseling with Nature and, as will be seen, with fellow-man. Vigor and intensity made up for poverty of vocabularies. Sticklers for the pure, stout English of pristine times would have here had their hearts gratified. Unceasingly and familiarly did many men use short, ugly words that grip at the vitals of life—that unashamed burst out in naked fact, in naked anger, and under the pressure of other elemental realities and passions. Women could stop up their ears. As for children, it was apt to be held necessary to prepare them

early for a rough and tumble future where spades would be called spades.

Not only the speech sounded raw, terse, incisive, but these roots of a conversational English, suggesting Shakespeare's days when men spoke out quite as they felt, were here on this *quasi* Texan boundary weeded over by a growth of new slang and profanity. Those expressions grew into added forcefulness from the type of men who felt much but said little and *that* to the critical point—under the belt. Goring Lone Star steers, kicking mules, Panhandle cowboys, Texas Street, the erratic climate, the problems of the poor yield of everything, and the almost total lack of living comforts and enlightened pleasures, had to be confronted, and the act engendered inevitably an idiom unattractive for the rhetorician to contemplate. A hard life truthfully pictured in a hard language!

The core of the pioneer population on the Plains was sound and bound to ripen into any success in store. But it needs to be said that this core became sorely afflicted by schemers, tricksters, who made business and life very troublesome. On the waves of this post-war immigration sailed in rogues taking advantage of the mixed conditions. Among them were quacks pretending to be doctors, pettifoggers, and pious frauds who under the cloak of religion acted eager to deal sharply. The "skeesickses" grabbed, cheated, with the idea that they could suddenly quit the region with impunity. Up to this time courts and laws were not on good-going legs. Titles and rights

had not been thoroughly established. If such men seized hold of a privilege, they hung on to it as a right with, "What are you going to do about it?" Possession, nine points! Contests, conflicts, naturally arose over ownership. Antagonisms owed their origin to unfair advantages or outright wrongs insisted on, such ill-doings disappearing with time or the departure of undesirable individuals.

This scum, floating here to-day, there to-morrow, brought along a miasma of deceit, all the more visible by being on the surface. "Sicken somebody in a quick deal and leave for other parts," expressed the peculiarity of this "scullduggery." Chicanery—a custom in this unaccountable country? Business in the Desert—like a horse trade with outsiders? Has not the seller of a steed always been justified in juggling the truth or hiding facts? It is for the buyer to find out what he is getting. *Caveat emptor*, to be sure!

No one wished to sift the pasts of immigrants, for if the region could amount to much for speculation or development, it needed people "right quick." The Plains, being in a hurry, seemed in no position to demand a choice. It took what came and tried to get along. So people often had to hang on hard to what they had in the confusion and rancors. Learning to look out about being "euchred" sharpened their wits. It required time to find where reliability lay. But in all these civilian frictions, firearms were not resorted to. Such violence did not correct nor avenge.

Religion, as mentioned, suffered by being abused by some strangers who swept into the country and used the Bible to mislead for financial gain the unwary. A special form of hazard that settlers encountered and endured! This increased embarrassingly the difficulties of buying and selling. It early became a rule among discerning business men to distrust newcomers and others who prated loudly about their piety, holding the Scripture in one hand, as it were, to show they wore a double X brand of honesty and that what they wanted and the way they wanted it could not but be right.

Prevarication is an ancient evil found, of course, everywhere. Yet lying in those frontier days, owing to the frankly nomadic and irresponsible nature of a part of the population, appeared free and bold in that part, interspersed as it was with outright scalawags. How many persons would you have lent money to with the confident feeling that it would be returned? Individuals who got tricked found it impracticable or expensive to hunt up sellers or traders in the wilds of the unblazed West. The incoming of greenhorns from the East, supposedly easy to swindle, supplied fresh victims.

Local cynics were disposed to lay the blame of the amount of prevarication in this West to the light and circulating atmosphere. "To blow" and twist up the truth seemed to the whimsical quite a fitting human attribute where the climate—all Nature—was blowy. A sidewalk Pessimist would say:

"These 'ere blatherskites jes' seem to like to lie. To

lie fer themselves, fer Kansas, fer the Plains, is the first ar*t*icle in their creed. It does 'em good. Makes 'em feel nateral. Suthin about the climate that makes a feller want to keep blowin' off steam. Look at me! I useter not talk much on the Mississippi bottoms, but as soon as I struck these 'ere desert zephirs, my jaws an' tongue limbered up. Spellbinders! They can blow an' blow about the Plains an' never seem to git relief. Tongues flop up an' down at both ends. Appear to pivot on the middle."

However little the breezy weather had to do with the habits of such prevaricators as existed, the short amount of money—"specie"—had a great deal. Be all this as it may, the above state of things contributed liberally to the harassment of good folk already so anxious, half downcast, and as yet so meagerly able gratifyingly to succeed. But underneath this overgrowth of what was so little encouraging, there remained the rootage of excellent qualities of the leading class of sensible, reliable people in whom lay the true hopes out on the American Plains.

Probably we cannot do better than to represent the pessimists there by one of the scoffers and wags, and listen from time to time to his "take-offs" and to his summings up of these depreciating beliefs. Such a character in Abilene we may call Lem Hanker who expanded into its leading cynical contemplator and jester, soon knowing or affecting to know everyone and everything locally to the pith and marrow. Purporting to be a general trader, he presently combined with this the serving of papers

for the sheriff. He could blame his general failure on the "fine climate" or the market or another "party." It kept him in an agreeable frame of mind to be half "down on" the country and to invent drolleries about the Plains, his fellow townsmen and humanity at large.

Like most of the earliest inhabitants Hanker was constitutionally averse to hard toil. He did not walk if he could ride. To a high-toned man like him, riding should be the normal habit for a gentleman. Cheap folks, folks not bright enough to earn a living without manual labor, slaves as a caste, walked as a sign of their abased state. His duties for the sheriff developed into congenial ones since they enabled him to ride over the country while exercising authority.

That the Texas cattle business threw his local business to the rear seemed partly to put Lem's nose out of joint, resulting in the ironical pose in his attitude of being for the stock raisers as against the farmers. He agreed with the former: " 'Western Kansas' has a stepmaw Nature." It could only be good for property on the hoof. The "fine Eytalian climate," which the boosters began to advertise, was "bad medicine." The attraction of this Paradise Very Much Lost: "A feller don't have to work much, fer what's the use?"

Anyhow drink and loose shoes, he claimed, constituted the best guarantees of earthly happiness. "Out 'ere him that ain't great on winnin' stands fer jes' as much an' can flirt his tail as high over the dashboard as him that hits it up better. The unsuccessful gent has more leisure to

cogitate an' be sensible which the successful gent don't take time fer."

When the post-office found its new location, a saloon opened next door. Here at the most convenient position for observation on the residents and their actions Lem Hanker usually took up his station under the eaves as shelter from the stray rains. He watched and moralized on the string of citizens passing to and fro about the matter of mail. This point of vantage stood handy, too, for whisky, plug tobacco and cigars. To be by a saloon favored chances of falling heir to a treat. Lem said he came from the malarial Mississippi River bottoms and had to drink some to keep off ague. But he never got top-heavy.

His favorite posture was to lean on the side of the saloon, one leg crooked behind him and against the clapboards to support himself easily, his slouch hat drawn over his eyes, giving him an oracular aspect. A chewed cigar hung habitually between his jaws and he frequently cocked it up at a high angle. Attended by one or more chums of like uncertain or low instincts, harmless fellows living by odd jobs and in the full odor of liquor and tobacco, Hanker held forth almost daily, discussing and betting on livestock trades, the weather, county politics, the doings of men and women of the settlement. He seemed, as a semi-official, to have inside information for his wondering hearers. He pretended to name the stingy, the selfish, the shysters. He knew of any mean tricks being played. His comments and judg-

ments were pronounced with a confidential, judicial air, densified by virile jests and unrelieved by ever a laugh or smile. He shifted his quid to emphasize his sententiousness.

"The only kind of farmin' I can perceive out 'ere is farmin' the gents comin' into the country. The right occupation fer us neighbors is to git a good team, meet the trains, sell the lost souls from the East land or anything at a raise an' make our money that way. Farm the greenhorns, milk 'em. It suits our temperament—ridin' round an' talkin'—anything but workin'. This 'ere wind on the Plains will allers give fellers plenty of air to keep their bellers goin', so it's a dead open an' shet game. In other words, a cinch."

If a woman went along happening to lift her skirt a little above the filth, there resulted guarded winks and remarks among the group. Long trains of dresses in those days, when it meant a mortal sin for women to expose their ankles as well as for men to behold them, afforded the latter, nevertheless, satisfaction in appearing experienced enough to estimate and appreciate such bewitching exposures. The excitement over the fleeting glimpse of a trim feminine ankle often so affected these oglers that resorting to the saloon cooled their ardors by drowning them. Though Mr. Hanker was not the kind of man whom women spoke to, they knew him well by sight and itched to learn what he might be saying about them. At his accustomed stand, among his cronies, he

would transfer his cigar butt to his other cheek, giving it a firm, judicious grind, when a "female" passed.

"'Em long grass wimmin from way back East do wear a good brand. They got a kind of willery, sway-back carriage that the short grass ones out 'ere ain't got. Of course 'em grain fed durhams cost a heap more to winter an' summer, but they carry their flesh better. If the promoters of this 'ere town would employ this dame to parade its streets twict a day, she would be the best ad fer the hull country. Show prosperity, gimp an' high tone! They ought to have her picter on letter heads with 'Live Stock Product in Kansas'—or suthin. It would beat all the hollerin' an' bellerin' goin' on, an' cost a heap less than bribin' the newspapers an' oraters from lettin' the truth out about the Plains."

In a dry year sagacious Lem Hanker was delighted. He then sojourned oftener under the eaves at his corner, the additional weight of correct prophecy poised on his important shoulders.

"I ain't standin' 'ere fer to keep off the rain. Such times as these I claim is the best fer cogitatin'. So I cogitate. An' I looks around an' I says, 'Where, O where, is all the boosters about the Desert?' On the bum, gents, —you bet your bottom dollar,—strictly on the bum. About the only occupation left fer 'em fellers on the Plains is runnin' fer office. The legislater will have to git up more soft berths fer more office-holders, to save the population.

"What did I allers diagnosticate? The blowhards was playin' the devil tryin' to make a country that ain't fit fer farmin' no good neither fer cattle an' hogs by monkeyin' plows over it. Farmin'! *Farmin'!* Shucks almighty! Fellers with money stays East, I observe. Only the broke ones comes West. They say 'em Easterners is fast people. I say we Westerners is jes' as fast. We're so blame stuck out 'ere that we can't git away. Let all calamity howlers raise on their hind legs an' roar out Grief. *Now's* their innin'."

Lem Hanker's observations became valued for their searching frankness and apparent profoundness, and the best class of men grew fond of stopping to hear the truth respecting the latest gossip or to obtain an opinion concerning a public question, with a good chance of going away laughing. He belonged to the town as common property.

"Money ain't everything. I know what I know. The Old Testament fellers had money an' chillern galore. But look at the men in the New Testament! They had no homes, no property, no chillern to speak of. All broke. I'm one of the New Testament kind of fellers. It is *down* on money."

CHAPTER VIII

TEXAS STREET AND ITS ADVENTURESSES

In the gallant attack of the South on the North at Gettysburg, the campaign joined issue, as we well know, when the invading columns of Lee from a westerly direction came against Meade's army along a front from north to south. The southern invasion by the Texas Cattle Trade on the Plains met the northern columns coming from the easterly direction, the collision foreseen to be at right angles at the acute point of Abilene, Kansas. While the high and rising tide of armed cavalcades in their war plumes advanced from the south, a very much larger but unarmed tide of men advanced from the east.

The Lone Star Trade was in 1870 more extensive, prominent, formidable. The patrician cattle owners, their torrid temperaments emphasized by flourishing mustaches often faultlessly "set," became visibly annoyed by the number of settlers who, to the stockmen's view, destroyed the value of the Desert by making it a tremendous weed patch not worth hoeing. The Chisholm Trail had to deviate frequently to avoid plowed land and fences. Quarrels, individual collisions, broke out. The grangers owned the land but the Texans were by and in their northern capital, in a region where scarcely a flimsy,

clapboard structure of jurisprudence existed. They stood out as the over-lords on the Plains.

Kansas in that district of the Sixth Principal Meridian looked during the hot months much like a Texas province, with Texas Street for the northern boundary of that State. Abilene represented the paradise of a commonwealth whose nearest border lay some three hundred and fifty miles distant by air line. The total cattle transactions mounted dizzily out of proportion to the size of the village, occupied at present by perhaps eight hundred adult residents. It appeared unique, phenomenal. A visitor in those days was reported as saying of Abilene,

"I never seed such a little town have such a mighty big name."

While the stockyards, with its trackage and huge scales, had been extended, long trains of cars day and night crowded upon one another in the haste to dispose of the immense herds. The headquarters of the proprietors, Drovers' Cottage, was ever noisier with equestrian cattle magnates. Most Southern males possessed military titles, having lately come out of the Civil War. The bold emblem of the Lone Star stuck on everybody and everything from below the Red River, heralding the glory of the conquering austral realm. In this *régime* one saw cattle succeeding cotton as king. The man gifted with "cattle sense"—a good or uncanny judgment about them—was looked upon as an example of the high extent to which human wisdom could or needed to reach. Sticking beeves, "bustin" bronchos, shooting about, ap-

peared as the loftiest accomplishments. The longhorn steer—the idol of the day! What a Rebel yell!

We have seen Abilene's only highway in season freely become like a Lone Star heaven and home. Texas Street was the first thoroughfare in the hamlet—the grassy one indicated vaguely by a few cabins or huts which we remarked in the spring of 1868, only two years before. This artery's prong-like form is best understood from our sketch map of Abilene on page 139. The western block or two next the creek always remained rather vacant in Texan times. Lone Star life ended, even at its height in 1870-1, at the hotel marked F in the sketch. The distance from where Texan Abilene began on the west to the stockyards at the eastern limit was never more than a half-mile. The street's southern prong stretched east toward the yards and as wholly civilian.

At the point of bifurcation Texas Street proper turned north at right angles for half a block. Thence its direction headed northeast where after another half-block it became a civilian street following in a general fashion the diagonal line of the adjacent railroad which ran straight through the town from a point a little north of east to a point a little south of west. This eastern end of the route passed by the entrance of Drovers' Cottage while at the same time gradually nearing the iron rails. Afterward it went along by the track to the stockyards. Lying in the above manner about a block north of the line of the school house and church on the south, or half-way between them and the railway, Texas Street as such never

reached out more than two short city blocks. What there was of the village at first tied itself naturally to and around this only and busy avenue, while the highway remained half filled up, and scarcely at all on the north side.

The new buildings for trade and dissipation in 1870 were, like the first, frame. Still usually cellarless and propped up on stones or blocks of wood as if ready to be easily moved away, they stood mainly with their gables to the thoroughfare, the gables always reaching out and up flush in rectangular flares bearing the names of proprietors and businesses in the American manner. Cheapness characterized consistently the structures, mainly erected for summer use or as if for a warm climate. Some showed paint, some not. Some had board awnings out over the sidewalk. The constructions evidenced how each owner suited himself regardless of the architectural fancies of his abutting neighbors. There was nearly always only one story, but if a loft, the stairway led up to it on the outside, ground space being, of course, less costly than inclosed space.

Similarly irregular and, besides, discommoding lay the noisy sections of sidewalks. None existed before many of the buildings. Then might come one part two feet high, dropping suddenly twenty inches before the next door. The whole formed a jagged line. If one of the sections stretched before empty lots it soon fell to weaving up and down while echoing loudly when trod on. It could make one dizzy. The walks, owing to the dry

weather, shrank into various conditions, and the nails, sticking up, proved annoying or worse. Pedestrianism became somewhat menacing.

The street was now more pretentiously disfigured. Its unpainted surfaces checkered glares of painted colors. It seemed considerably like a bee-hive, the places of trade often intercommunicating through side or back doors to accommodate the needs of the freest welcome and incandescent weather. If, as repeatedly happened, a man wished to escape in the fear of being shot or captured, he found an easy retreat in this elemental maze where friendly hands could hide him somewhere between the ends of the thoroughfare. Its temporary or impermanent aspect reflected the natural and correct expression of the insecurity of life and property. Who expected surely to live to be back the next year? Any day any *habitué* might be shot down intentionally or accidentally or be driven out of the country.

While the Texas life densified, it kept principally inside the chief boundaries of its district except as it widened a little toward the southwest—toward the creek. On the major side—that of the south and east—buildings lined it fully from about two blocks east of the creek. The north side was now half taken up by stores. Hardly a saloon there. On the south and east—the inferno! The street thus showed small disposition to invade the civilian parts of town and did not cross the railroad track, beyond which civic Abilene at present rapidly grew up.

Civilians, including women and children, still went

about their affairs in Texas Street, since it retained the main stores and the post-office. The residents helped form a curious, unexpected assemblage where a respectable group and outlaws intermingled physically while not socially. One would see by the side of a half-drunken cow "rustler" bristling with weapons a modest woman or child trading at a counter. And also mixed in among the desperadoes were, oddly as it likewise appeared, law-abiding Northerners as store proprietors, leading the most temperate of lives. The family of such a gentleman, a very religious household, dwelt above its grocery in the middle of Texas Street during all those years, free from personal disturbance. In winter there could not well have been a serener village spot.

The stores included distinctively the outfitting establishments dealing in firearms, saddlery, buckskin supplies, boots, slouch hats, horse blankets. The most marked feature, however, was always the drinking resorts, often affording gambling facilities. For a man to be killed in a saloon only added to its notoriety, and drew custom. In the heyday now many saloons were licensed to crowd into the incredibly short space. Their ornate brass bars shone forth in the jumble of rude constructions and surroundings suggesting a rough, booming, mining camp. At night the saloons changed into fierce spots of white lights—a flaming Hades—in a darkened county, in a darkened State. Nothing could have been more out of key with the rest of the Plains, holding out the ideals of quiet farms and homes.

Texas Street buzzed more than ever with excited people from different points of the compass, in the plenitude of roistering prowess. The murderous Texan or "bad man" being to the fore, the non-murderous civilian and farmer kept necessarily to the rear. Important drovers presented themselves as Crœsuses and cowboys became the cynosures of all eyes, both ruling from the saddle. Their dress, accouterments, took on, of course, the Lone Star brand in their savage embroideries. The steerprodders, always with hips hugely buttressed by six-shooters, with bulky spurs jingling, cracking quirts in hand, raced about on caparisoned mustangs. Drunken or half-drunken men were too many to be singled out. Anybody shot in the air when he pleased to be in high spirits. Each "gent" stood good for a drink. The "waltz up to the bar" sounded the popular measure. No pinch-penny farm and village population this! Generosity burst forth as the motto, and hospitality the custom, of a breed of human beings here in the intoxication of a free, unstinted career

> Where life was cheap as bullets,
> While whisky that rocks to sleep
> Was dearer than any commodity
> And very much harder to keep.

The pistol and knife continued to be guardians as well as enemies of life and possessions. Those weapons represented not only self-protection but destiny. Since the Lone Star man on the Plains was then required to be a

fierce individualist in order to survive, he thought of the Now. Very natural that he should try to get out of it all he could! Before the rampageous cowboys (far outnumbering the drovers) there bowed the saloon-keeper, gambler, criminal, in smooth preparation for raids on pocket-books. Every door and window opened invitingly to Texan and other stranger alike, the unidentified and godless human stream flowing in and out, here and there.

Then the adventuresses! To round out a sketch of the people and life in the most infamous town then in our West, it is necessary to include the Delilahs. For they ranged conspicuously and helped stir up trouble. They were unexampled in their garb, both fashionable and extraordinary, and decorated the appearance of that village natively shorn of adornment. Besides, this American gang, in addition to the tough and vicious American male gangs we are needing to depict, evidences to present-day people, who may be comfortably accustomed to think of Americans and their make-up as of one or a similar sort, what our race could become in particular exemplars or groups. To omit this phase of Texan Abilene would defeat anyone's full attempt to explain this inconceivable village.

Open prostitution was thought an unavoidable evil in that, to us, pretty rank epoch and was legalized or *quasi* legalized as an accepted adjunct of civilization. And it went against the grain to jail a woman in the Desert. Indeed, Abilene never then had a lock-up for the delicate sex. Consequently the courtesans there shared in the

common habit of publicly "bulldozing." "Bulldozing" is a propensity in armed persons before the unarmed, and it played a noteworthy rôle in Abilene and elsewhere on the Plains. A merchant stepped around meekly when waiting on an individual with pistols or knives and did not quibble over his commands. "Nobby" ladies, with dainty repeaters or knives in their boot tops, did not always fail to "bulldoze" to get what they wanted quickly. So gallant ladies in Abilene were not only outstanding objects in their magnificence but disposed to emphasize their rights and privileges of a riotous liberty.

You may understand a performance like the following as of 1868. On a burning afternoon the railroad representative unlocked the door of his little frame station, for a freight from the west was about to rumble across the creek bridge. He noticed with the indifference of his class a trunk and a box on the platform. Behind his ticket window, his straw hat cocked on the back of his head, he traced a fond name in the thick dust on the counter to the popular tune of "Do you love me, Mollie, darling?" He thought of his girl back East. Almost every unmarried man on the Plains had or was supposed to have a girl in the East whom he planned to bring on as his wife when circumstances favored.

Suddenly the young man beheld a Texan Street character framed by the narrow doorway. Being extendedly "togged out," she had to twist about to get indoors. Her skirts were bridged out behind for a couple of feet, but their trestle work jerked them up and they didn't reach

down behind to the ground as in front. It contributed to the freakish uncertainty of her equilibrium. The whole ample construction in which she stood invested danced and jingled with flounces, fringes, beads, jets and like gimcrackery, showing a copious outlay of cash. In her blaze of colors the bows, feathers, pompons, brandished like antennæ. The agent might have imagined some monstrous, terribly brilliant, tropical beetle which, intensely passionate, first loves, then eats, her mate.

This patroness of the Kansas Pacific swayed up to the counter and bought a ticket for Junction City.

"To-morrer is Ladies Day at the circus there." She had her trunk and box to check. The railroad man gazed callously out of the window.

"Can't check any box, madam."

"What's that?"

"We check trunks, of course, but boxes have to go in freight cars, or as express, and be paid for."

"Say, young feller, what are you givin' me? I call my box a trunk an' she has allers went free in the passenger, an' in the passenger will she allers go if I go."

"Regret it, madam, but this is the new rule."

"Rule? Cheese it! I don't run by no rules an' I don't pay fer no freight or express neither. Tumble? An' I ain't goin' by no passenger nohow. I'm goin' on the freight—in the caboose."

"Sorry, madam," returned the agent firmly, as her pale, rotund face and spiny hat filled the ticket window. She reached down and the next second he looked

into the embouchure of a glittering gem in the form of a tiny pistol.

"The Kansas Percific 'pears to be gittin' proud as a maverick on an auction block. The freight is comin' an' I've got to make Junction City. You check 'em two right now or there'll be a small morgue round 'ere."

The depot master promptly changed his ideas. He didn't feel called upon at the salary he received to sacrifice his life in the enforcement of a minor rule. He picked out speedily two checks under his patroness's cocked revolver, and she bustled out on the platform with him to be sure of no false play as the agent dusted. She enlivened the trip by garnishments of the dark red roses of vituperation as the freight pulled in.

"This ain't no railroad nohow. I was in this country before any railroad, an' in 'em days when we started fer somewheres in the stage coach or on a trail we knowed *when* we was goin' to git there. But this 'ere railroad has got a day-after-to-morrer time-table. It stops at every buffalo waller an' prairie dog town. An' Abilene ain't even a dog town. It's a pup town an' one of 'em is the depot agent."

The Amazon, busy as the reputed one-arm man with the hives, returned to the counter to get her checks registered. Having them securely in her possession, she swaggered out of the door with, "I'll be back!" "God save us!" muttered the young man. On the platform again she gave the two brakemen four "bits" to load her and her two pieces of baggage on the caboose. And the

agent was relieved at length to see her, laboriously assisted by the two men, clambering up the high steps. He wiped the perspiration from his face, thankful not to have chiseled on his tombstone

SHOT ON TEXAS STREET
BY SALERATUS SAL.

In the matter of gear, the *demi-monde* of Abilene exhibited marvels, emulating the cowboys when rigged out in full regalia. If we look in Godey's Lady's Book and Magazine for about that year of grace, 1869, we may well be bewildered. The voluminous, built-out skirts encircling women on a diameter of four or five feet, trains frequently trailing on the floor or ground, the confusion of frills and kindred ornaments, made the human form inside seem like a mast on which all the array was swung about. Small, round hats increased the sense of enormity in the dress—hats perched anywhere on the hair as if quoit pitchers had made ringers.

In the ladies of adventure in Abilene, "stunners" in every sense of the slang term, those modes took on barbaric features more contentious and domineering than captivating, as observed in the above example at the depot. When on parade those temptresses looked gorgeous as Brazilian butterflies, showing themselves, equally with their paramours, flaming and intimidating as well as gallant, their expansive and expensive skirts snapping in the prevailing breezes. The "splendiferous" attires

in public dazzled the eye with hues and plumes. Hats exploded in daredevil sunbursts of directions.

Thus, following that day's fashions of pudicity, the body of such a woman, instead of being at all bared, appeared sheathed in an excessive clothedness. Its egregiousness was emphasized by her immense or dominant bustle, making her apparently deformed. The bustle, offset by her high, narrow heels, added to her aspect of being thrown forward, reflecting or anticipating the popular Grecian bend. From under her dress skirt would flash forth at intervals, and visible afar, a petticoat likewise complicatedly flounced and of vivid rainbow colors. Costly jewelry loaded and precious stones starred her person.

Another characteristic: her high boots of finest kid, with gaudy clusters of tassels flowing from their deeply scalloped tops and the Lone Star beaming. Her feet being shod almost vertically and obstructed by her skirts, she could only hobble along. In one boot top she carried her purse, in the other her jeweled pistol or dagger. Her weapons not only protected her life, her independence, but could save her from being defrauded. No male creatures were more on their dignity, more assertive of their ideas of self-respect, more resentful about uninvited or unwelcome liberties with their persons.

To meet the Texas Cattle Trade this astonishing collection of individuals of "the feminine persuasion" sojourned in Abilene during summers in the full presence of the inhabitants unamazed at last by anything in the

way of humanity. The Texas Street woman, apparently so prosperous, completed erratically the figures on the violent and sumptuous canvas of that Trade. From her fat wallet, from her wages of sin, she would "plank down" cash on counters before respectable men and women accustomed to cringe under poverty or limited credit.

These sirens hailed from Kansas City, St. Louis, Memphis and other points in the Mississippi Valley. They belonged among the "left-overs" from the prostitute population who plied their trade on our western rivers and in their cities in the upheaval of the Civil War. Like the male visitors they were of the toughest, most desperate class. Each of them knew she existed here with her life in a "gamble," and recklessly dived into the red or pale whirlpool surging around her, staking her being as freely as a poker chip. Hence she came armed. This was a familiar habit, adopted from the armies, among a part of the post-war population in the West. A few of these Abilene women had killed a man. They did not always hesitate to rob their guests, often enough intoxicated. Thus their brawls were sometimes accompanied by shooting or cutting escapades which altogether made acute disorders in that precinct. Even if a woman had been ordered out of town, she would only have been succeeded by another, perhaps worse.

During the first year of the organized Texas Trade these females, as seen, remained scattered around in Texas Street, living in any kind of quarters. They were

not tolerated in saloons, contrary to widely accepted notions, and did not hold dances there. Saloons did not court such additional conditions for bad blood. They didn't need to. The Cyprian entertainments and broils took place in the Cyprian domiciles. It came about that the women, while scattered about in the western half of the town, partly congregated in a line of houses lying next to Texas Street on the southwest. But, unfortunately, this was also immediately adjacent to the school.

Such creatures made the Texan rowdy restless, agitated. When changed into viragoes, they burst promptly into anger and had long lingoes on the handles of profanity to lash maddened determinations. They could be said to know no law, no authority, few decent men and, of course, no decent women. Life for them meant a poker game of lust, cold coins being the stakes. Calculating, shrewd, they did not get intoxicated with their patrons. They realized that by keeping their wits they need never give accountings to drunken cowboys scattering "specie" on the floors.

Yet men who drank at "elegant" bars the highest priced drinks and smoked Havanas required "elegant" dames, making little difficulty about rates. With plenty of grudges and feuds among themselves the Texans became quickly, furiously, jealous over their rank charmers. Conflicts due to rivalry ensued. The women rawly turned down punchers for rich victims. Usually respecting no engagements or affiliations standing in the way of the most gain, they liberally kept the stews boiling with

antagonisms, always prepared to shoot through or carve out hearts. The men called these mates by a frank Shakespearean name. The latter dubbed their friends "pards" and others "galoots."

Sprees in the fancy houses assumed the form of dances so apt to end in shooting or stabbing. The crude woodcuts of the time exhibit imperfect glimpses of such scenes. The men danced coatless in woolen shirts and buckskin "pants," with revolvers buckled round hips, "pants" legs stuffed into boots, spurred heels tripping and tearing over dress trains. The walls advertised "Bitters"—the generic term for liquors. "Bitters" suggested euphemistically a cure for snake bites, malaria, chills and fever, nervous dyspepsia, a run-down state of feeling, as well as being a "whooper-up" of joy. To start off an evening some person might do a clog or the buck and wing. Then, I believe in the words of J. G. McCoy, came the "fandango to lascivious music in company with maidens to whom virtue is an unknown and unrespected grace and to whom modesty is a lost sensibility."

CHAPTER IX

THE DAY OF FRIGHT

As seen from the account of General Dodge on page 10: in the winter of 1867-8 Cheyenne, Wyoming, and in that period Julesburg, Colorado, had been ablaze from assaults of desperadoes called gamblers. But such fireworks at railroad termini proved to be episodic, meaningless, being promptly put out. Abilene was the first town on the Plains where organized wickedness during a long time held sway as part of a constructive industrial or economic situation.

The spring of 1870 began early there with the music of Texan bullets. In May the cowboys entered, the cattle trade waltzed about in complete swing and the ball fully opened. Finding that the town presumed to establish a government, the punchers celebrated their arrival by shooting about in groups.

No effective civic readiness had been made to cope with the lawlessness, though ordinances had been published and the office of marshal created to see to their observance. Gambling and minor vices were overlooked in the hope for only an outward appearance of decency. There came forward many local, but not satisfactory, aspirants for marshalship. Two or three of these men being tried,

their failure advertised the state of anarchy. Would the mayor be attacked or shot down as the official citizen whose duty was to have law and order enforced? No one could tell.

A candidate named Smith dropped off the train on his way west, having heard of a marshal wanted. He interviewed the mayor. He identified himself as the Smith of the notable Bear River fight in Wyoming. The mayor heard rumors of that contest as a part of the floating, unwritten history of fighting men on the frontier. Nothing like this battle had been known there except Wild Bill's Rock Creek affair. Smith was indorsed by a reliable citizen. The trustees hesitated a day or two, impressed. Although the stranger's personality belied his reputation, and his credentials proved acceptable, to think of having a good government by means of such a notorious man seemed incongruous, unwelcome. The mayor informed Smith that the trustees didn't know him well enough to put the town in his charge. It entailed much responsibility. He smoothed things down by saying he thought he did Smith a favor. The office meant a death trap. Smith understood, left his address, shook hands, took the train again.

The mayor had, in fact, another plan. He sent to St. Louis for a couple of United States soldiers to act as marshals. Assuredly they would not be afraid. Two came out one evening, looked over Texas Street where special deviltries were displayed for their discouraging benefit, departed on the next train without saying good-by. The

rôle did not suit their taste. When the mayor talked with Hanker about being marshal, Lem took a new "chaw."

"No bein' marshal fer me. You know I ain't got money enough to pay fer my funeral an' I ain't jes' ready to die yet. My name is Hanker but I ain't hankerin' fer bein' marshal. Let the Texans take the country with its jays, sand burs, an' chiggers comin' in. What kind of a country is it anyway that a feller stands round an' bets what its next hard blow is goin' to be an' then tries to dodge it? Folks will allers be poor an' thirsty out 'ere. This 'ere West is only an excuse. An excuse fer not workin'. That's the reason I tarry. The whole dog-gone place is a joke. You take it too serious. It ain't worth it. Texans is used to Hades, so they be the only kind that can get used to the ar*ti*cle 'ereabouts. It's only them that would give two whoops an' a half fer the hull Plains. Look at me tryin' to fat stock fer the market. Cholera an' everything. An' the highway robbers at Kansas City don't give you enough net money fer a carload to buy your ticket back to Abilene.

"No—thanks. Thank God, I don't have to 'ssociate with no cowpunchers when they're full of unrectified whisky an' tryin' to do the buck an' wing in a dance house. But what you can do fer me is to support me fer sheriff when I run. A white man's lay-out! If I can lasso that, I figger I can pile up enough money fer to bury me in decent comfort up on yon hill where I can feel the zephirs fannin' my cheeks—reach out now an' then an' pick a prairie rose—an' seek succese of sorrer."

The outlook, ill-omened indeed! Abilene with no protection and known to be defenseless!

An occurrence of the utmost seriousness now completely upset the capital. A small stone calaboose was being built right by the center of Texas Street. The Lone Star natives did not take at all kindly to this stone warning and insult, as they regarded it. They thought it honorable to kill and be killed, but to be incarcerated—an outrage never to be outlived! They tore down the jail. It was rebuilt and its roof bolted on under a day and night guard.

The first occupant turned out to be a Negro cook from a cattle camp. He had been shooting out the street lamps and found himself shoved into the calaboose. For even one of their "darkies"[1] to be there was resented as an indignity by the Texans. They forced the door of the jail early the next morning—blowing off its lock—and released the "nigger." He fled. The Texans ordered the business houses to close, in some cases invading them on horseback. A group of cavaliers with the Rebel yell came whirling up from Texas Street in a swirl of dust, buried shots in the mayor's building and swept on to the stockyards. A small posse with weapons hastily formed in his office, determined to reply with bullets when the Texans returned. But for some reason, doubtless not from fear, they veered, disappeared on the prairies and were not heard from again.

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[1] A black Negro was called "a headlight in a snow storm."

This open defiance of the town could not be ignored. Citizens of the valiant stripe procured guns and pistols, bid quick, excited good-bys to wives and children, and set off coatless in buggies in every direction to bring back the colored "buck." The one sentiment of the civilian men: Capture him—jail him again—put a guard around the calaboose—show the Texans now Abilene's firm, sufficient authority! Otherwise all control would be lost. In this man-hunt one observed how many persons who would be thought active proved non-combatants. And men who had never been considered warlike shouldered guns or belted on pistols and shared in the feverish chase. Other individuals unexpectedly came forward with virile civic instincts and lent a hand. In the hurly-burly it became strangely overlooked that with the fighting men away, the women, children, homes, business places, remained at the disposition of Texas Street, while cowboys were reported to be drinking heavily and getting crazy.

Here lay the scene. Stores and offices stood either unprotectedly open or locked, the more helpless men, left behind, aimlessly walking about in dread of an onslaught. Wives, their houses unguarded, moved back and forth in their yards or on corners, talking, wondering, shedding tears. From under their aprons or parasols they peered over the hills, looking for the return of their loved ones with perhaps Sambo in hand. Would they get home alive? When? Business and housekeeping—suspended! No meals eaten!

The civilian town stood paralyzed. Hopelessness seized the population, sure of destruction. It was as if the citizens had already bidden farewell to their property, to Abilene, while vaguely relying on Texan chivalry not to shoot people there. Children, seeing their mothers scared and often weeping, took turns at crying in their skirts. Vehicles filled with armed residents went and came at all hours, yet never a satisfactory result. Some firing took place in town and also in the aroused countryside where the pursuit had been partly joined in by old soldiers gleeful about once more hunting an enemy. But the firing, to the public relief, sounded too desultory to mean anything to a people accustomed to hear rapid shots.

Every eye was chiefly on Texas Street where the murderous Texans might any hour ride forth—a resistless cavalry! Cowboys galloped now and then up and down the highway or to the stockyards, shooting in the air, threatening to put out the "headlights" of the town, hurling challenges at creation. Reports constant that the Lone Star men had organized! The surprising situation came about that Northerners pursued a colored man while Southerners defended him—aided his escape from shackles.

Rumors flew about. He was captured—hadn't been seen—couldn't be tracked—Texans raging—forming a defending phalanx around him! Surely there would be an ugly fight, if not war, if he were caught and the attempt made to lock him up again. Many commenced to hope he

would not be caught. Much better to let the Texans alone about him and trust to luck to be saved from tragedy!

That long, balmy, summer day dragged its slow length along in the racking suspense, while predictions increased as to the violence of what might or would occur. Nightfall descended at last, adding darkness and sleeplessness to the awe. A few townsmen stayed out till dawn on hopeful trails. The others returned. No "nigger." Hide nor hair of him could be located. Too much start! Some of his confederates were brought back, but the trustees voted down the proposition to hang them and sent them back over the Trail.

Next day—one of peace—after the Texans won! They got their man away. Yet the townspeople felt they had shown spirit, determination. As in the case of the Bull's Head saloon they drew long breaths, having escaped with nothing worse than sharing honors. The calaboose was hastily fixed and the empty building patrolled day and night to prevent its stones being pulled down, scattered.

With an adequate leader, this would have been the Texans' time to organize a revolt against Abilene—take it over for the Lone Star—start to wipe out the farming interests by driving away the farmers, seizing what could be used for cattle, destroying the rest. Perhaps one thing then saved the town. And that was bad whisky!—thought to be Abilene's worst enemy. One or two drinks of the Texans' frontier "bitters" appeared good for initiative and courage. Four or more drinks made men too wild to

act efficiently, or demoralized their will power and muscles. Likely the Texans had drunk too much rot-gut. At any rate no leader, luckily, concerned himself about pulling out of the fire the Lone Star chestnuts. The drovers may have had in mind the safety of their herds to be shipped from this, the only, point. Where would any kind of a conflagration end? What if the stockyards burnt?

No general Texan attack burst forth on the town. It and its people—still saved! "Western Kansas"—not yet a Lone Star county! So this day of fright, of tears, came and went and no death blow. But the situation left behind continued as if accursed.

Decidedly clamorous, unruly, became the cowboys after their victory. Another outbreak was looked for any day. Texas Street began to flame with mutiny, some thirty saloons having been licensed in it. On the other hand civilian Abilene and the Chisholm Trail country had become by no means insignificant. The property of the considerable population looked, after all, too large to be left exposed to devastation. Should Texas Street rule as if in a pandemonium or the residents rule through law and order? Ought the street properly be let alone to its way of living in its precinct? Or must the town authorities insist on having it abide under the peace and goodwill banner of the rest of the community?

No precedents could be brought forth to apply to the unique circumstances that made the strange town what it was. The trustees wished somehow to play a hand both

firm and soft. They didn't want to kill the goose bringing the golden eggs, still less did they want to be killed. Without Texas Street, where would Abilene be? Yet with it, living resembled life on the rim of a more or less active crater.

Human considerations came up. Who the natural proprietors of the Plains? Were both the Texans and Easterners interlopers and shouldn't the better set of men be free to win? Were not the red men before God, if not before humanity, the true owners? Their homeland had been sold without their knowledge or consent only a few decades before by one race of white men to another race of white men when scarcely an individual of either nation had set foot on the domain.

As the mayor actively looked for a marshal who would fight the Texans with some of their own kind of fire, there swerved in on the boiling waters of his troubles one of those well-intentioned but perverse cross-currents which so often sink or tend to sink worthy practical successes. The small Puritan population in the village put out the watchword—Purity and Peace. Purity could be victorious in Abilene. The wicked on the Plains must experience a change of heart. A strong dose of piety should purge Texas Street of sin. Turn the other cheek! If all could be pure in spirit, the town would become white in stainlessness. This section of the population did not realize the inefficacy of distributing Bibles among cowboys who, with few exceptions, could not read and would be apt to shoot bullets through the Scriptures. It failed to

SAN RAFAEL
PUBLIC LIBRARY

understand that if such a quixotic program could possibly be entered upon, the bottom might drop from under the whole country.

As the harrowing conditions intensified, the mayor received "bulldozing" letters. The blinds of his office were torn down, the windows broken. He wrote:

> Growing cowboy insolence was exhibited in various ways —some ludicrous and laughable. The posted ordinances were viewed with a mixture of awe and curiosity at the outset, and gradually their significance and purpose were comprehended. Finally our failure to enforce order was contemptuously and concretely celebrated by the cowboy horsemen taking shots at the abortive fire-arms ordinance as they galloped by, until the city fathers themselves could not have retraced the lineaments of this municipal offspring.

The mayor *had* to act. Nothing was left him but to telegraph Smith to come back. He picked him up at Ellis, Kansas, on his road to Denver. I often heard my brother tell of Smith's installation as marshal of Abilene. It ran something like this on the dazzling day of June 4.

His Honor (not yet twenty-nine) made a clean breast of everything. Would Smith take the marshalship if offered it? He would.

"Smith, I'll tell you what to do. I want you to know what you would be in for. Pretty tough. I'm afraid it's going to get out of hand in spite of all. I advise you to look around Texas Street to-day. Then come back and we can do a little figuring."

Smith smiled rather grimly.

"I don't think it's necessary, Mr. Mayor. I've been looking round some on my gray. But I'll do as you say."

The mayor had a double purpose. He wished to play fair with the imposing newcomer, and also needed more time to "size" him up—think things over. He hoped Smith would tell more about himself, hating to ask him. But the cool detachment, the self-contained modesty, compelled. "What if this is the *one man* in America we're looking for!"

When Smith returned in the late afternoon, he declined to come into the mayor's office as the latter stood bareheaded at its door. The stranger remained outside, removing his hat. It developed that he had mainly occupied the time in seeing the stockyards and the creek bridge. The mayor was disquieted because matters didn't seem to be taken more seriously.

"I haven't seen anything much different from what I expected."

"You mean you would take it? Do you think you could control the town?"

"I think it can be done," assured the Irishman leisurely.

The mayor waited for him to suggest how he would go about it. No information being volunteered on this score either, the mayor began to feel more uneasy over such nonchalance. He knew that the rather silent type of frontiersmen, unlike the garrulous type, did not like being asked questions. They preferred to hear others

talk. Believing that Irishmen were addicted to speechifying, another thing stuck in the mind of the mayor: the first-class heroes of the Plains appeared impassive, differing from any blustering variety of fire-eating Texans. The very muteness of Smith spoke out. The mayor fell back on the last britching of his confidence: this, the main man in the Bear River war.

"Well, you see what shape we are in. Do you want to begin?"

"It's what I came for, Mr. Mayor. You sent for me. What about the ordinance against arms being carried in Abilene?"

"The Texans won't disarm. As well try to take away their wives—if they had any—as their six-shooters. We posted the ordinance. They tore it down—shot bullets through it. To try to insist would bring on just the trouble we're trying to keep out of. We don't want to force impossible issues."

"Post up the ordinance again ordering every person to disarm on coming to town and staying disarmed while here."

The mayor looked at the other aghast. Had this man suddenly gone insane?

"You—don't—think—that—*necessary*?"

"Nobody can handle this town if the cowboys go armed. When they drink, they think only of shooting. If they have nothing to shoot with, their drinking and gambling won't hurt much."

"But how on earth would *you—one man*—disarm

them and the drovers—and the professional 'bad men'? It's a little army. One against an army."

"I believe it can be done."

"But it will mean a wholesale fight from the word go. They'll turn loose on us."

"It won't be exactly a holiday, I admit, but that's the proposition as I see it."

His Honor plainly quailed. He stared at Smith critically again, attempting to pierce his make-up through to the backbone. Was His Honor putting himself into a deluded man's hands? Henry played nervously the end of a ruler around his face, raking his mustache. Then he thought again of the Bear River fight. He stiffened.

"All right. You can have new copies of the ordinance from the printer to-night for posting. You can have anything you want if you're sure you control the trump suit. I'll promise you this—we'll stand shoulder to shoulder. I'm tired of stepping among eggs. Our citizens are tired of being run over—kept afraid—hung up in the air. They showed they would fight the other day. We're inviting peaceful immigration in here by the carload—women and children. And we meet them with what they call Hell Street.

"Ridiculous! Is this a sane, civilized country or has it got the blind staggers? Our residents and farmers want to know who owns the Plains. The settlers have taken up Government land and made improvements on it. The residents have bought lots and made homes. The Texans have bought nothing, paid nothing, have title to noth-

ing. Should they rule the roast and drive us all out? And I want to tell you we've a lot of old soldiers in this county. I saw them turning out the other day when we had the negro fight. And there are the Government troops at Riley and Harker—by Godfrey!—if it comes to that."

"I don't reckon we'll need any of them."

"Well, we want a marshal with the proper *nerve*. We'll go to the limit with him. Smith, I guess there's nothing to do now but swear you in."

"Yes, I see my horse is pestered with flies. I don't want him to get out of temper. I'll have to get a fly net. Nothing to worry about to-night, Mr. Mayor. I'll look over the tough spots. It will probably take ten days to know where we are."

"I'll get the Bible. We are somewhat ceremonious. Official custom."

The Bible was found near the front door. Holding his bridle, Smith stood on the ground before the mayor on the small pine platform below the door, the sun blazing in the latter's face from across the other's shoulder. The two men remained uncovered, Smith raised his right hand, put his left on the Holy Book, and the mayor pronounced the formal words.

"This is a grave moment for me as well as you. I'm giving the town over to you. But I'm betting on you—that's all."

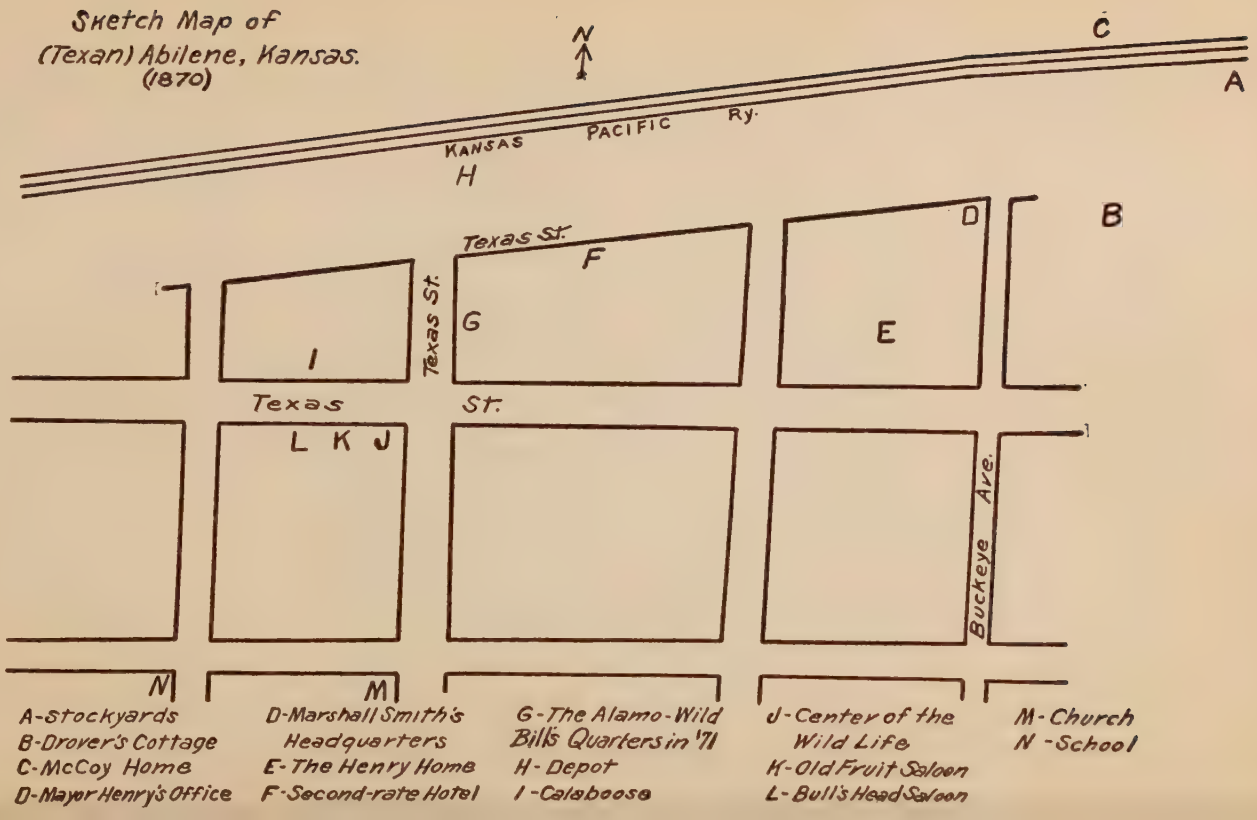
"That's all right." The big silver badge was clapped on. The new marshal gave the mayor's hand a confident

grip, turned unruffled, swung himself majestically up on his high horse who champed his bit, bent on being off toward the west.

"I'll get the ordinance at the printers to-night, Mr. Mayor. It will be posted over town by morning. I'll report to you at nine."

Smith tipped his hat with a cordial "good evening" and wheeled away to Texas Street close by. As the mayor, still unbared, with the Bible clinched in his right hand, looked at the other against the yellow-red glare of the western heavens, he saw that Smith wore his brace of revolvers under his coat. The coatless Texans wore theirs so plainly to view. The mayor watched the grayish figure on the gray horse. A flash of gray Napoleonic Grandeur! —the setting sun of Austerlitz?

The new marshal made the angle of Texas Street and sank from sight in its furnace. "*That* will be nerve!", the mayor murmured. He tiptoed into his office, got his hat, locked the door, walked slowly, solemnly, home for supper. Misgivings seized him. He felt the guilt of sending a man to his doom. He had no idea Smith would be alive in forty-eight hours.


Sketch Map of
(Texan) Abilene, Kansas.
(1870)
N
C
A
KANSAS PACIFIC Ry.
H
B
Texas St.
F
D
Texas St.
G
E
I
Texas St.
L K J
Buckeye Ave.
N
M
A-Stockyards
B-Drover's Cottage
C-McCoy Home
D-Mayor Henry's Office
D-Marshall Smith's Headquarters
E-The Henry Home
F-Second-rate Hotel
G-The Alamo-Wild Bill's Quarters in '71
H-Depot
I-Calaboose
J-Center of the Wild Life
K-Old Fruit Saloon
L-Bull's Head Saloon
M-Church
N-School

CHAPTER X

TOM SMITH, MARSHAL OF ABILENE

To contend single-handed as city marshal against a horde of untamed panoplied males!—unaware of any statutes as the charter of existence; bred as if in a land of murder; assumably encouraged by cattle men of wealth and standing; making a Satanic mate of unrectified whisky; ready to run amuck like their longhorn steers!

An especially troublesome, dangerous feature of Texas Street life was the fact, as you may well understand, that its population appeared not stationary. New herds of beeves brought new gangs of punchers. They could know nothing in advance of ordinances, nothing as to a marshal. Before being deprived of their firearms, would these rangers not have to be taken personally in hand, one by one? Would they not have to be *shown?* Ahead loomed an endless series of contests with fatality as the natural issue.

The drovers could quickly get their weapons among their effects at Drovers' Cottage or at camp and didn't usually carry them about town. Moreover, as individuals of affairs, negotiating with buyers and credit men from the East and dealing among local civilians of peace, the "toting" of revolvers in town was ordinarily unnecessary

and struck a false note. Yet under the proposed circumstances, these proud Texan masters could be expected to resist being separated from their property in the form of six-shooters.

There now deserves to be described at some length some of the remarkable activities of an almost forgotten, though an almost invaluable, hero on the Plains. Compatriots looking for material about an epic figure of flesh and blood, a noble, sane, gentleman of not only Spartan virtues but morally irreproachable, who dared at once to face adequately large groups of unbeaten ruffians, who performed unsurpassed feats of valor one after the other in a wild, dangerous metropolis, need not go to ancient tales of Europe. There a long line of legendary heroes crowned their achievements by slaying dragons which never existed, yet these stories have embellished literature and art. Tom Smith of Abilene, of our own American soil, *lived*, and not long ago.

He did not merely display daredevil bravery. He conceived of a wise, indeed the only, plan in undertaking to subdue the town. The ordinance against carrying firearms being again and at once duly posted, he promptly began persuading the proprietors of hotels to assent to stowing into their safes the pistols of drovers and other guests after putting up a notice like this:

ALL FIREARMS ARE EXPECTED
TO BE DEPOSITED WITH
THE PROPRIETOR

The hotels where Texas cattle owners stopped looked for more business, more money flowing in; and the marshal made it appear that a town on a war basis doubtless kept many good people scared away. As to the cattle chiefs: a more alert and skittish responsibility than about fixed assets is the ownership of property on the hoof. Here were the shifting though important matters of securing satisfactory dates and accommodations for shipment. Drovers had come somewhat to realize how a continued lack of tranquillity could interfere in such arrangements involving both chattel possessions and a season's profits in livestock. Not only mischief even on the day of shipment might easily mean a loss of thousands of dollars, but the scandalous reign of lawlessness impaired confidence about all financing. The citizens, to their amazement, beheld the disarmament of the individual drovers brought about through the hotel-keepers themselves.

Yet the cowboys! Smith took the storekeepers and saloon-keepers likewise into his program, employing the same logic. Didn't they have more goods to sell? Didn't they want more customers? Weren't they there to make money? Did they think the most profit lay in a catch-as-catch-can situation? Abilene could be a place now where they might bring on their families. Wouldn't they prefer this to the present conditions where they felt that, for the most part, they must, in summer, leave their wives and children behind, live apart from them because of the outlawry?

These suggestions seemed unanswerable. Without any bluffing they were presented in a confidential manner by one man of reason to other men of reason, both keeping in mind a financial betterment. These proprietors, one after another, agreed to keep charge of the firearms of their customers and even invite such action. They saw in it an advantage in holding trade. Texans would deal where their weapons could be claimed. By this plan the proprietors became unsuspectingly co-guardians of peace —in effect, deputy marshals. Theretofore they had been officially left on the side of antagonism.

As against the cowboys the value of such a maneuver lay on Smith's side. The firearms ordinance, now seen everywhere in Texasdom, placed the visitor on the defensive. He might know on entering the town what could be expected. Merely deposit while there his pistols at no expense in the hands of friends! Smith gave clear, fair warning in advance. He played open and above board. He didn't look to get the quick "drop" on anybody not adequately advised. It was for the cowboys to act. Not to act placed them out of touch with the game and unflanked by sympathizers who could say, "You didn't have a square deal. You didn't know what was coming."

A legal poster amounts, of course, to little unless officially backed up by someone. So the marshal customarily rode on horse-back to enforce the bulletins. No one had thought of a marshal riding. Previous officials went on foot. But Tom Smith knew the effect. And such

an effect is familiar to readers of history. The great captains, monarchs, rode while their soldiers and subjects remained on the ground, looking up at them as of authority. Alexander, Napoleôn, on steeds! One might imagine that Cæsar would not have been assassinated had he been on a horse. Such is similarly the dominating influence of the orator on a high platform, the clergyman in his lofty pulpit.

Also a mounted man possesses a fighting advantage over an adversary on his legs. Shooting a man who is riding is more difficult than shooting him standing. The movements of the animal complicate: the latter is apt to get hurt or killed. The Texans loved horses. They took all pains to spare them. They would rather, it seemed, shoot a man than a mustang.

Marshal Smith, in this manner, ocularly *showed* the whole practical program: there the ordinance, there the depositories pointed out, here the man on horseback to execute. Another maneuver appeared new to the citizens. He marched his gray in the middle of the street. The reason was more readily seen in his taking the midcourse of the thoroughfare when he walked. The other marshals had stayed on the sidewalks. How easy then to shoot them from behind out of a window or door! Smith could spy on anyone waiting ahead of him. He could see on both sides of the highway better while keeping a watch on what might be preparing back of him. He held the center and correct angle of lookout. The open space around him, a defense!

His first two exploits in Abilene may best be recounted in the mayor's words.

> Almost immediately he encountered "Big Hank," a cowboy desperado, who had made himself particularly obnoxious to former marshals, and was loudest in his boast that no one could disarm him. Wearing a belted revolver, he approached Smith and tauntingly asked him if he was the man who proposed to run the town. Smith said he was employed as marshal and that he should try to maintain order and enforce the law. "What are you going to do about that gun ordinance?" "See that it is obeyed," replied Smith; and then quietly added: "I must trouble you to hand me yours."
>
> With a coarse oath this was refused. Characteristically cool, Smith again made the demand and again was met with profanity and abuse. Instantly he sprang forward and landed a terrible blow which placed "Big Hank" *hors de combat*. The marshal took away the pistol and ordered its owner at once to leave for camp, a command heeded with crestfallen alacrity.
>
> The news of this encounter was heralded over a radius of many miles. The unique punishment employed was wholly new to cowboy warfare, and every phase of the combat was debated. In a camp out on a branch of Chapman Creek a wager was laid by a big, burly brute, that he could go to town and defy the surrender of his gun. Promptly next morning, Sunday, "Wyoming Frank" was on hand to fulfill his boast. Smith was rather late in appearing. The desperado, impatient and drinking, began vaunting that the marshal had probably heard that he was in town and he "reckoned that he had lighted out." Finally Smith came quietly down the middle of the street, as was his wont, and presently confronted the advancing bully. Like "Big Hank" the evening before, he began chaffing insolently, with the idea of involving Smith in a quarrel as

an excuse for resisting the demand he knew would be made. Divining his purpose, Smith guardedly requested the surrender of the gun purposely displayed. Of course this was refused, but somewhat daunted by the peculiar steely glint of Smith's eye, Frank began backing as Smith advanced quietly calling for his gun. Frank steadily retired, maneuvering for time and space in which to draw his pistol, and thus have the drop on Smith. But he was balked by the latter's close reach. Finally they backed into a large saloon where the crowd, attracted, gathered around them. In the center Frank came to a stand facing Smith. To his courteous but firm demand Frank exploded an insulting oath and vile epithet. Quick as a flash Smith vaulted, and with a terrific double blow sent his antagonist prone to the floor, and with the unbelted pistol vigorously belabored the brute's body. Then, standing over him, he said: "I give you five minutes to get out of this town, and don't you ever again let me set eyes on you." The latent demon in Smith blazed defiance, and every spectator saw why Tom Smith was leader in the bloody Bear River riot.

For an instant all stood dazed and speechless, whereupon the saloon proprietor stepped from behind the bar and said to Smith: "That was the nerviest act I ever saw. You did your duty, and that coward got what he deserved. Here is my gun. I reckon I'll not need it so long as you are marshal of this town." That was a signal. Everyone pushed forward, proffering Smith pistols and overwhelming him with a profusion of compliments, expressions of admiration, etc. He quietly thanked them and said: "Hand your guns to the bartender to keep until you want to go out to camp." From that moment Tom Smith began to be master. No guns thereafter in 1870 were openly worn on the streets of Abilene as a custom, nor was Smith often publicly affronted. Of course, there were drunkenness and quarreling; dens of iniquity flourished and some murders even occurred; but his tact, courage and good judgment were al-

ways adequate to minimize consequences, and without resistance. Smith became alike popular with merchants, gamblers, citizens, and saloon-keepers. In a short time he ruled practically without oversight.

The difficulty, as explained, as to cowboys just arriving kept Smith, however, much occupied. A newcomer would shout to his saloon-keeper or merchant:

"Where's the galoot pertendin' to say my six-shooter is his'n? Where's the new feller?"

"That big stranger on the gray."

"What about him—tryin' to be fresh?"

"He's the 'old fruit.' If you want to suit me, do as he says."

Having expected a sympathetic assurance about hanging on to his revolvers the cowprodder would be surprised also to meet with more detail.

"You better let me take care of your pistols while you're in town. I'll keep 'em safe an' you'll know where they are. You don't want to git in trouble, do you? You want to have a powerful good time. What fun is there in lookin' fer trouble?" The puncher would be disposed to feel the need of a responsible friend—somebody to rely on for credit or other help if he got into a buffalo "waller." He would usually be persuaded.

There remained the obstinately obstreperous ones among incomers. "Disarm? Never heerd of sech a leery idee. Disarm fer no man!" When the marshal saw a ranger ambling with his weapons along the street, he said:

"My friend, oblige me by putting up your firearms with your storekeeper as long as you stay."

"Nobody gits my pistols!"

A lightning reach from the saddle, a prostrate Texan, a dismounting, a shouldering of the fellow, a depositing of him in the adjacent calaboose, the marshal leading his horse by the bridle! In another case the blow came from the butt of Smith's pistol. Once a man, struck on the forehead, practically turned a back somersault. Ordinarily a speedy, dizzying tap on the head, revolvers jerked away, sufficed as preliminaries to the tour of a Texan in distress, bound for the disgraceful dungeon. But an uppercut on one cowboy cut his tongue half in two. His face tied up, he could be seen about the street advertising the proficiency of the marshal. Another herder had two "slats" broken by a side swipe. His week's vacation in Abilene meant his squirming on a horse blanket.

An abashed cowman, surrendering his six-shooters, might say,

"Ye ain't goin' to give 'em back to me?"

"Certainly you will get them when you leave town. Name the store or saloon where you want them deposited, and you will find them there. They are yours." Such a "party" might be congratulated by a friend:

"You're a lucky feller—lucky you didn't git peeled over in the dust with a black eye an' poor city hash in the lock-up."

The unnerving news spread. What about the new

kind of tactics on the Plains? Bystanders rubbed their eyes: "We seed it ourselves." Later a dialogue of this nature could take place between a proprietor and an intimidating longhorn from a cattle camp.

"Better let me keep your pistols until you go out."

"I'd like to see the man to make me quit 'em." It would not be long before such a visitor would be slipping back.

"Say, Jake, keep 'em fer me, will yer?" He had heard things.

The Texans, as seen, were not boxers nor fisticuffers. They never learned in Abilene how to fight except with weapons. They knew as much about boxing as (in their words) "a hog knows about a sidesaddle." To be knocked down, rolled in the dirt, in addition to being jailed, illustrated degradations they thought twice about before becoming frisky. One understood why Smith carried his shooters under his coat. Men could see them bulging out, realized they existed, credited him in Abilene with a markmanship of devastating accuracy, though not a two-handed shot like Wild Bill.

A couple of other innovations. This marshal cleaned up the street every time he passed along, constantly patrolling until about midnight. He left behind no unsearched nooks of hostility, no bad work for the morrow. Instead of being foolishly heedless, he didn't throw himself away in recklessness. If his life went out, he meant to have a Texas Street value in exchange. A marshal was paid to live, not to die cheaply.

Smith invaded also the precincts of the women. He told them they needed no pistols, the men turning in theirs. They disgorged a wheelbarrow load. He placed notices on doors to the effect that the colony would be ousted if he saw a sign of firearms among them. The women had eyed this official with contempt, then with doubts, then with alarm. For when they heard of his knocking down offending men and lugging them off to the calaboose, they feared for their capital in trade—their looks. Their faces might get spoiled.

"I swear! Look at that! No bungin' up of my daguerre'type, you bet!"

It had soon dawned on the cowboys that they faced a stiff play for which they could offer no counterings since the marshal, occasionally shot at, didn't seem to get hit. The outcome: the town authorities abruptly found themselves in a new way busy. The calaboose began to house Lone Star representatives. The machinery of a local court was oiled up and running for quick trials. These resulted usually in orders to keep the peace—keep the appearance of peace. Penalty: deportation, in which instances offenders would be defenseless before the point of the marshal's pistol. Thus he aimed to conquer the town while not killing men. The "cantankerous" ones had to leave or be jailed for court proceedings.

Nearly all the above people, opening up the Plains to civilization, were Americans. Good or bad, they belonged to our race, being fated to figure in the answer to the question of existence in a sterile dominion theretofore

largely avoided by white men. They belonged among our pioneers (under the definition of that word) who, famed in history, song and story, first occupied or controlled this large section of our national patrimony—that Great West.

CHAPTER XI

TOM SMITH, MARSHAL, CONTINUED

Tom Smith's so-called oil lamp exploit was the one most talked of in Abilene. This night raid in the Old Fruit (I think it was) saloon stood out in high relief. It ranked among the most noteworthy of frontier feats.

A Texan had defied an ordinance by an overt act, and in the late evening, Smith located him when entering this resort. The Old Fruit could be called one of the cheapest saloons. It looked rather deep because of its narrowness. The chairs, tables and sparse fixtures disheartened one, the effect being further corrupted by the spurious show of the bulging and minacious bar. The bar ranged along the west side of the room, occupying about half of the wall space. Three or four oil lamps dimly lighted the premises. The usual drinking place or store had a back door opening on an alley. The Old Fruit offset its front entrance by a side one, leaving the rear a boxed-in space.

The Lone Star offender that evening joined ten or fifteen cronies engaged in imbibing and talking at the bar. Before they were aware, Marshal Smith came in and moved a little toward the left to cut off the retreat of the wrong-doer. As Tom advanced he faced the turning

crowd which, suddenly silent and already partly awed, felt that something very cool or perilous might happen.

To fight a gang was a specialty of the marshal as well as of Wild Bill. Each had what now would be called a crowd psychology. Texans did not wage a conflict well in bunches. They attacked solitarily. If without a leader, they didn't know how to organize in a solid bunch. They jostled one another to-night and acted as if waiting for someone to shoot first.

The cowboy in question retreated to the rear of the room. When Smith began making his way to him, the company parted instinctively into two groups or rows. He swept his antagonists with his pistol from right to left. No one then could get the "drop" on him. He passed down the lane. The longhorns in disorder pressed toward him from behind.

The *mêlée* commenced. A couple of outlaw shots were fired, two revolvers being grabbed from their repository under the bar. Only Texans got injured—slightly. Tom had the protection of the group. For a shot at him might kill a friend. The uproar intensified. Knives couldn't be used because of the marshal's effective fists. Many allies defeating themselves!

A half-drunken herder thought of the lamps. He snatched one from its bracket—hurled it at Tom. If it exploded, the place would burn up and everybody in it. A hush of horror! All knew the awfulness of such an experience. For Texas Street had recently had an example. The wife of the railroad section "boss" went one after-

noon to her stove with the kerosene can to start the fire for the evening meal. On pouring oil on the ashes a lurid flash resulted and she and the room were in flames. The poor woman, rushing to the street, collapsed. She lingered two or three days in agony in the adjacent hotel, then died. Before the conflagration could be put out, it destroyed three or four buildings. Much of the town would have gone in a stiff breeze.

Such a holocaust did the men in the Old Fruit now think of. A stampede started toward the doors. The lamp struck the floor at Tom's feet. An ominous flickering! But the lamp failed to smash. No explosion. Either the glass was too thick or the oil too poor.

Meanwhile the marshal reached his man who, being "covered," offered no effective resistance. Tom collared him, disarmed him, tossed him upon his shoulder and made for the front door. The Texans raged. Not even burning lamps counted! The two longhorns who surreptitiously shot straight at Smith would have sworn they hit him. He didn't appear to be "fazed." It was staggering—weird.

The situation got more bungled for the punchers by a blunder. Some of them, trying to help rescue their mate, blew out the lights. Yet toward the dim glow from the street door Tom stalked along with the Texan on his back. To strike at the foe was for those cowboys more likely than before to strike at a friend. Even when the marshal crossed the street to turn the key on his victim in the calaboose, nothing could be done to prevent it. The

herders still didn't dare act. They might kill their "pard" whose body sprawled over Smith's back as he gripped the other's windpipe.

The successful audacity of this deed seemed to palsy Texas Street. What manner of man this? He couldn't be scared—couldn't be shot—couldn't be burnt up! The citizens soon realized that their marshal possessed a mentality which he appled: that he had a worked-out scheme which he followed. He concentrated his forces, like a military expert, against the link in the chain thought to be the strongest link, namely, the recalcitrant cowboys. Proprietors pulled together with him. Generalship!—at the hands of a ready boxer who could, if necessary, shoot straight!

Marshal Smith's rôle gave the first distinct hope for saving the town and for the promise of good and substantial development on the Plains. He made manifest the turning point at its livestock center.

On his horse he was a sight to remember. When he reported at the mayor's office, everyone would know of his being inside because of his gray hitched by the door. There came up usually nothing to consult about. If the contrary, it didn't take this official long. Apparently making light of the vicissitudes of Abilene life, Tom tarried occasionally in the outer office, agreeable to the clerks, to callers. But he would soon mount Silverheels and trot away as if feeling more at home in that saddle and on his beat.

The mayor wished many times he had more leisure

to probe into this personal history, doubtless one of the frontier wonder tales. He hoped to hear Tom tell of the Bear River collision. Yet the other still opened no diary and the mayor considerately did not venture on the subject. Where, he wondered, did Smith learn to manage Texans? It appeared he was never in Texas. Where did he learn to box and be able to pierce the center of a bull's eye? Had he ever had loved ones? Why was he out West alone, risking his life in the sport of death? Neither Texan, Yankee nor veteran of the war.

The city marshal, admittedly now, showed constructive intelligence, dexterity, intrepidity. And something else. Will—iron will! This proved to be the base under it all, supporting him in action. His *jaw!*—as we see it here in his photograph taken at the time. Who might doubt the meaning of that feature? Nature implanted there its own sign of outstanding volition, defended by a courage of adamant. Has not will more solidity, ponderableness, steady endurance, than nerve which is good mainly as an expedient, an experiment? Why did Smith possess will and those cowboys at Abilene only nerve? Because, evidently, the one embedded its Cyclopean foundations deeper in the bed rock of character while the other lay shallower. Nerve suggests the superficial, the temporary. Will has a design, nerve an inspiration. Will is invested in a sense of duty. Nerve displays whimsicality, showiness, recklessness, often unavailing even when successful.

Iron will! But a riddle always masked the man who

saluted the mayor every day. Would the secret—the story of a tragedy hidden in this life—come out any week or would it die with him? What added to the conundrum was this further surprise: he evidenced the kind of breeding which seems only the offspring of early advantages.

Ideas about the reason of Smith's survival became at length partly unsettled. The Texans accused him of wearing a steel plate under his shirt. Hence his escapes from shots—his evident lack of fear about being hit back! Notwithstanding this report he would have been idealized into a mystic benefactor had there been any figurative mysticism in the people and their existence.

And it will be borne in mind that psychology did not then enter as a science on the Plains. Conduct seemed sufficiently explicated for the most part by the visible actions of external objects and, to a far less degree, by direct Divine interference. Man there considered himself objective rather than subjective. The cult of the Will was not yet raised up anywhere by many philosophers to overcome the tyrannical cult of Fate. In almost every age epic figures, apparently existing outside ordinary mortal forces and expedients, have remained customarily under the ægis of heaven.

A steel plate, not the occult, could, therefore, better account, to this knotty-grained pioneer population, for the marshal's mastery. Metal was simple to understand, so evidently a protection. Proficiency at pistol shooting

and a steel plate defended by lively trained fists might quite well explain the riddle of the undaunted Tom Smith. Spontaneously, loyally, appeared put aside, however, insinuations about his courage being due to a coat of mail. Had he not anyhow shown far more pluck than anyone? Some people came to believe in the existence of this shield, and it heartened them all the more as to his safety and that of the town.

As it was, the residents manifested toward him instinctively the deepest gratitude, the highest respect. They idolized him quickly and Abilene presented him with a brace of pearl-handled revolvers. But, though pleasant, he did not bear toward the public an informal, intimate air. He inspired, instead, feelings of reverentialness, sacredness. While the civilians courted no "chummy" relations with him, they experienced a satisfaction in holding up their heads in more security and breathing a freer atmosphere. They quit stepping among eggs. They began to think: "These cowboys—bluffers when they haven't their six-shooters!" Tom had at once shown the right path. Strange that no one had understood what now looked self-evident! For the first time the citizens felt associated with a hero after one pattern suited to their ideals. Tom Smith stood out as exalted.

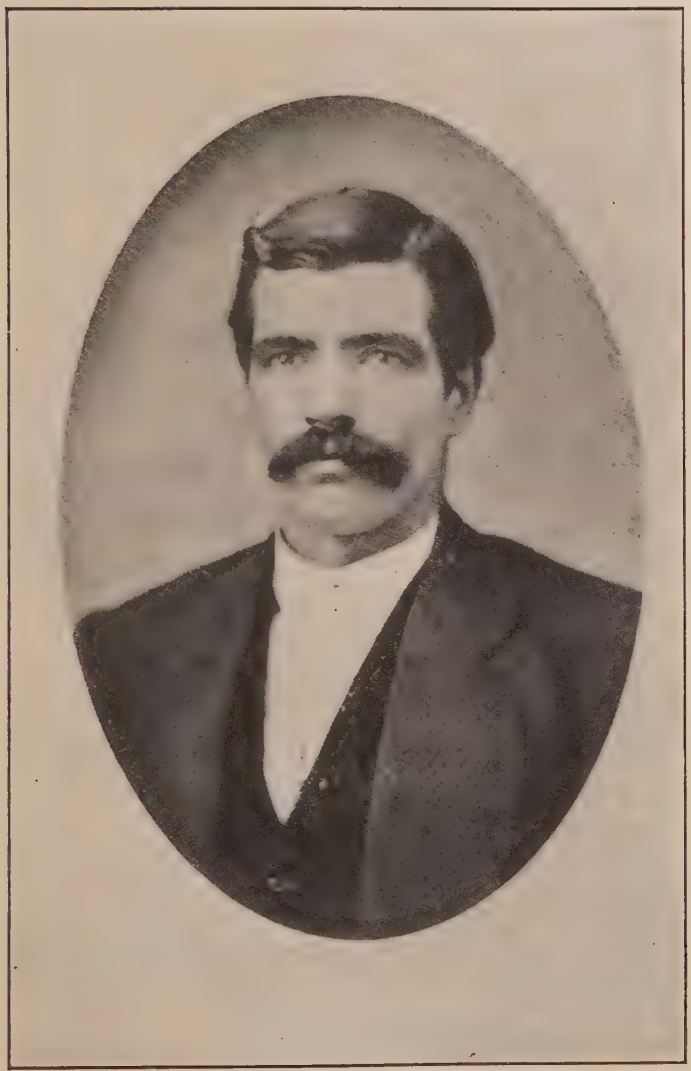
Courage, bravery, presented two aspects on that border. One was to give an antagonist an opportunity to save his life; the other, not to do so. Many fighters, though considered brave, sought to surprise, to sneak

back of a door or window or up from behind or otherwise, to get the "drop" on their victims, and exhibited themselves as of a mean, vicious, "low-lived" sort. Snaky as a quirt! Even a rattlesnake warns before he strikes. The other type met an opponent openly and squarely in front and offered him more or less of a "gamble" for existence. This is what Tom Smith did. This is what Wild Bill did and is a reason why, in his way, he commanded admiration.

To the citizens Marshal Smith on his big gray looked, in fact, like a giant defender. Yet they dreaded the thought of his valuable life being cut short by a shot, intentional or stray, from a forbidden weapon. An accident, an incident, could perversely put a stop to this unparalleled pacification of a Gehenna. How could he help being sooner or later hit? He couldn't look on both sides at once. He couldn't peer in front and behind at the same time. The concealing night too—far worse than the day! Not only was there anxiety for the marshal in an individual contest, but what if the Lone Star men combined?

The mayor learned later some details of Tom Smith's career and gave this account.

> Thomas James Smith was born in New York City about the year 1840. His parents were of Irish birth. His Celtic origin showed in physiognomy and build. In temperament, character and bearing he was thoroughly American. He was nearly five feet and eleven inches in height, weighed 170 pounds, was broad-shouldered, erect, athletic—physically



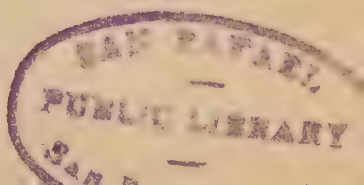
Thomas James Smith, the marshal and hero who, single-handed, in 1870, subdued wild, notorious Abilene. He showed that the back of Texan domination on the Plains could be broken. Photograph taken in 1870.

superb. Of fair complexion, auburn hair, and light mustache, his gray eyes of a bluish tint were his most expressive feature when aroused. His manners were gentle, unobtrusive, and simple, his voice low-toned and evenly modulated, and his language plain and direct. In the presence of his official superiors he was deferential, almost diffident.

He was fairly well educated, reared a Catholic, and was clean of speech. I never heard him utter a profane word or employ a vulgar phrase. He neither gambled, drank, nor was in the least dissolute otherwise. He was singularly, and perhaps significantly, reticent as to his early life. I cannot learn that he ever mentioned his family; nor was it ever known that he had any living relatives. He had been well bred and good blood coursed in his veins. Some sorrow or tragedy, mayhap, early drove him from home and friends, out alone into the Far West. It is nearly authenticated that he was a victim in the Mountain Meadows massacre, in Utah, in 1857, and left for dead. Certainly, a little later he was in western Utah and Nevada.

Smith served at one time on the police force of New York. I have shadowy details of his wanderings over Utah and Nevada. Thence he returned to Iowa with wagon-trains, hauling railroad material westward. Next he appears on the frontier of Nebraska, employed in various capacities, following the Union Pacific construction. What a world of experience such rugged schooling brought him! Finally, and authentically, he was engaged with a large contracting firm whose headquarters in 1868 were at Bear River, Wyoming, where many hundred employes were congregated. The business men there had organized a "town" government, so called, adopted laws of their own and appointed a marshal. Naturally, many outlaws and desperate characters collected and crime and lawlessness abounded.

A young man from Smith's camp, his friend, merely disorderly under the influence of liquor, was placed in jail where there were three others who just before garroted and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robbed a couple of men in open day. The exasperated citizens incited by a fugitive newspaper, housed in a tent on the outskirts of the town, organized a vigilance committee, made wholesale arrests and locked the prisoners in jail. Smith's camp companions invaded the town, destroyed the newspaper plant, and, after releasing the prisoners, proceeded to burn the jail, when Smith himself came on the scene.

The vigilance committee had, in the meantime, armed and gathered in a log storeroom, about fifty yards away. Smith, roused to fury, ran to the very front of the store, and emptied both his revolvers into the barricaded vigilantes, but fortunately killed no one, although he received several shots from the vigilantes. Despite several fearful wounds, he coolly marched off to a friend's house, a block or so away, where for a time his life hung in the balance. Troops from Fort Bridger were summoned, and the town itself was soon abandoned, as the road moved on.

That Smith's motives and conduct in the premises were generally justified is evidenced by the fact that quickly upon his recovery he was chosen marshal of the next town, and so on continuously as towns were successively located and abandoned, as the Union Pacific progressed, until it was completed, the following year.

Tom Smith's expertness as a police officer thus became explained. His strict training on the New York police force enabled him to shoot straight, box and ride well. No steel plate was found on his body. There had never been any.

By dovetailing in the above account with General Dodge's quotations, we can piece together Tom Smith's later record. The Union Pacific Railroad track had been laid by Irish laborers from its east end and he, an Irish-

man, was connected with that construction. As a result of his brave demonstration in the Bear River riot he became marshal at succeeding riotous termini as the road advanced westward. Hence, when he located in Abilene he brought experience for its job, and this, not miracles, accounted for his consummate handling of the town.

CHAPTER XII

CIVILIAN SUMMERS

I can seem to hear even now, after sixty years, the roar from the great Abilene stockyards, the yells of cowboys brutally punching into over-crowded cars those tortured, feral steers bound for immediate butchery. Their awkward, obstinate long horns made men curse. I can seem to smell that jungle odor which little whirlwinds brought back to us through the sweltering atmosphere. The racket kept up late into the night, so often almost stifling like the days and distressing for sleep. But the burning dry air felt exhilarating as well as wilting.

There was the constant smell of the powdery dust, thick on the lusty weeds, on everything. The redolence of new lumber—pungent pine—also freely greeted noses, owing to the buildings going up. As the residents began to prosper a little, one saw them now and then improving their yards by setting out hedges six or twelve inches high and small spindling trees. The cottonwood and box elder ruled as favorites, being quick growers. The population wanted to have, as soon as possible, a few green leaves, a bit of shade, in a land nearly as shadeless as the sea.

The notion of permanence increased. The ballast to it in this capital were the church and school. They augured that the future might somehow turn out good. And then the famous Texas Cattle Trade with all its spot cash!

Yet the itinerant proclivities of part of this frontier folk showed here in a disturbing aspect. That could be seen in the readiness to sell homes for a small "raise" after pains taken to fix them up "a bit homey." Such owners would dispose of businesses and residences any day, move on west where there was only barren scenery, and begin again, all the time imagining they seriously looked forward to the day when they could have houses with foliage. A home people with that characteristic of homelessness!

If you take up with the conception that a village as constructed exemplifies mental, spiritual and æsthetic attitudes in its inhabitants, you would readily judge how Abilene in its unprepossessingness came about. Its civilian part was representative of all towns on the Plains. A barrenness in its architectural types, an absence of sightly form and color, a lack of notions of beauty, would then seem to correspond to the state of minds of the particular category of pioneers we are just describing. The civilian section of Abilene, in now scrambling over on the north side of the railroad track, looked not merely incomplete but disjointed and zig-zag. Few structures bore other than defiance to the remainder. Many a resident wanted his construction to be different. Though most of the building presented itself as plain as economy could make

it, there developed the disposition to have a house or a store protrude in chip-on-the-shoulder ends, angles, points, as if daring the neighboring edifices to fight. It suggested a clashing back and forth, and the effect became augmented by the distorted sidewalks, as already mentioned, which, especially at night, discouraged the cultivation of friendliness.

Paint, when used, appeared generally not only of a dreary lead color but a shrieking hue to combat or offset the lively desert dirt. As a good piece of sidewalk frequently drew itself up abruptly before a mudhole, the population, without overshoes, tracked mud as well as dust over wood surfaces as a matter of course, and that helped destroy the presentability of any painted architectural display.

Interiors of early business places manifested a like homeliness, as if meant neither to welcome nor to please. The stores and offices, dirty and anchored by cuspidors which, though large, could never be large enough, were apparently maintained with no thought of a woman decently entering there. And this emphasized the case, too, in an epoch when women affected copious gears, cumbrous trains. Dresses, in mopping up filth, might be said to save much sweeping by brooms.

In the usual, scantily furnished home one or more cheap chromos might be noted or a stitched-in motto as if for daily guidance. A ghastly family portrait might possibly glare forth. One practical reason for all the above could be found in the migratory propensities of such of

the public as wished to "traipse" along with as few impedimenta as possible. To a discriminator this deficiency might reflect a deficiency in imagination and souls.

The chief strain in the settlers could always be designated as Anglo-Saxon. From the East did they come as genuine Americans of the bone and blood that made the United States what it was. No other section of Europe than England, Scotland and Northern Ireland could they represent with their pronounced views about political, religious and individual liberty and a liberal Government. The rest of their outlook remained an open field for a free-for-all, take-it-any-way-you-please, contest.

Let us see another snapshot of a part of the immigration. This part, to repeat, found it mainly easier to move west than stand up under the exacting competition in the throngs east of the Mississippi. They "kinda lazed round" at the job of existence. In the farming districts individuals among them showed themselves more interested in public life, in public questions, in keeping track of what the Government did and didn't do, than in thriftiness. They preferred to wade out excitingly into the rivers of broad propositions instead of hugging the fretting shores of details. Ducking from anything looking like peasant labor, they considered themselves of an exceptional breed who should live by their brains. They liked, being better sellers than buyers, to "figger" while whittling and spitting tobacco juice. They could tell

others how to keep gardens clear of weeds though they abandoned their own acres to overgrowths.

Gazing up instead of closely down and around they often tripped, but on getting up and shaking off the dust, they went on looking up and around. Claiming that the American woman is unexcelled, and inclined to help lynch a man who abused one of the sex, they let their own wives rather work themselves out. Husbands must have horses and buggies with which to ride about and observe, yet thought their spouses could run their homes with few conveniences. This dickering, swapping, spread-eagle species of frontier Yankee was the natural successor to the talkative species of first squatters on that border—the latter accustomed to sun themselves while chock-full of opinions as to all they had "seed an' heerd" and vociferous about the "mighty" curious country where they had now "tied up at."

But none matched for indolence the still more native American progeny—the few Indians here. While peaceful they wore at times their war paint and feathers and liked to stalk stealthily into a living-room and squat in the best chair. The plucky wives soon learned the best way to manage such intruders. On discovering a brave decked out in war regalia and sitting in her front room, a woman would answer his "How do?" by

"How do, John. John want to eat?"

"Ugh!"

Some food would be put in a paper sack and handed

over with an encouragement to departure by going to the door.

"Good-by, John."

"How do."

And the lazy, filthy "Lo, the poor Indian"—that proud, noble, figure in American coinage, currency, literature and art—would stride away in his moccasins, "totin' " his crust of charity at the hands of a trembling, disgusted soul.

Before the advent of Tom Smith, it had seemed almost out of the question, we remark again, to imagine the working-out of a harmonious plan for the residents of Abilene to live along side of, and so considerably mixed in with, the kind of summer visitors delineated in the last chapters. Nearly all the male civilians looked poorly dressed. They not only shunned the scarlet vices of Texas Street morally but as beyond their pocket-books. While the lavish Lone Star men lost few opportunities to enjoy life when making money, the Northerners beside them acted, as a whole, as if not seeing much for themselves except a prosaic grind in acquiring property.

The life in that West had to be regarded as a coarse experience, not for the thin-skinned nor cry-babies. Manly manners appeared usually as scissored off from the cloth of the general impoverishment. Blunt edges signified a candid, honest heart. Politeness clothed hypocrisy or some kind of yellow streak. Along with this rôle went open cruelty. Parents deemed it a duty

unmercifully to "larrup" their children with handy lath, often in public, out in the yards, trying to insert at one end what failed of insertion at the other. The pulpit apparently taught this procedure in its worship of Jehovah as wrathy about His offspring.

And what could be expected of boys and girls viewing the Texan cowboy life right at hand? They beheld bad people seeming to pocket and spend more money and certainly wearing better clothes than good people. The wicked alone scintillated in thick jewelry with large precious stones. Their making of existence a sport, a picnic of joy, free from much or any toil or care compared to what the youthful generation saw in the homes of their indigent parents, was a sight evidently possessing so much in its favor. Could one doubt logically about these descendants turning out to be criminal or derelict products?

But human nature, being subject to manifold surroundings and fluctuating influences, is so wide of a solved mystery that any stern contemplator would have had to have here on the Plains another guess.

Along with cruelty to the young went cruelty to animals. Men whipped their horses, beat their dogs and caused the blood to stand out on their cattle. Prolonged suffering in brutes was inflicted or regarded with much unconcern as part of the commanding state of conflict not merely among men and beasts but in Mother Nature herself. As an extreme example: a man, from whose care a dissatisfied neighbor had taken back his own horses,

tried to punch out their eyes with a pitchfork. There existed no laws, no societies, against ferocity, against savagery, toward children and animals. Callous conditions, callous people—those good, average people!

The hot, hot summer time! In dog days men sweat profusely while figuring in their little stores or offices. Between sales or trades you beheld them idling there, longing for something to occur. A bunch of Indians skirting through, a string of prairie "schooners" passing, a train an hour late, even a change in the wind, afforded subjects of extended interest. Godsends in the way of news were a dog fight, a swearing quarrel between two residents, the broken limb of a neighbor tumbling off a new roof.

Yet the observer knew that the great source of reaction in Abilene summers remained, of course, Texas Street where events now and then happened or might happen any hour. A young detached civilian man would occasionally drift there of an evening to see the sights, to witness perhaps a fracas at a safe distance if possible. He might take a drink at an "elegant" bar or venture a long glance at a poker game. But he would be a stranger, separated from this life, holding himself well aloof, fearing he might get caught in a pistol affray. It was a spectacle offering no congeniality. With such exceptions the resident men, we see, kept socially quite out of that purgatory. Civilian Abilene continued as moral as any town anywhere.

In the shortage of social distractions there, the sign

of an increase in salaries of clerks could be noticed in their sharing Sunday dinners at Drovers' Cottage. This seemed an important pleasure to which they could look forward all week. Since they lived in cheap boarding places it did them a world of good to amble up to the hotel counter on Sabbath forenoons, register among the "big bugs" from hither and yon, and have the wide dining-room doors flung apart for their entry.

The conspicuous dip afterward into the huge bowl of wooden toothpicks, a dime cigar selected with care from the cigar case, then an easy chair on the pretentious veranda for the afternoon—these the luxuries to which their dinners entitled them! On the veranda, while chewing politely a toothpick or a cigar butt, they would scrape acquaintance among visitors, learn their missions, enlarge on the opportunities of the country, speak approvingly of themselves. If a clerk chanced to be in the land business, it constituted a part of his duty to hover in that and other ways about the Cottage, engage sojourners in land talk leading to possible deals, and later hang on to them like grim death to and from the depot. This was also true of owners of something to sell. One smiled knowingly over the fact that people called such persistent gentry sand burs, referring to them as similar nuisances.

In the spring and early summer the prairie flowers, carpeting the Desert with ravishing, multi-colored designs, sweetened the winds delightfully with vagrant perfumes. The beautiful, billowy prairies with their gen-

tle swells and gentle troughs or ravines! How free their life! One could read the dithyrambs of the liberty-loving town poet, fond of singing of the fact that a fellow and his "gal" could hop in a buckboard and "light out" immediately in a straight line for Canada, the Rockies, Texas, with never an artificial hindrance in his route. No fences, no ditches, not to speak of forests or lakes, barred the way to the wide, wild, treeless Plains. The summer days invited one to this freedom, being customarily radiant, bathed in a champagne atmosphere and enlivened by zephyrs usually going down with the sun. Over the small river at Abilene would often hang a luring veil of haze like light smoke, suggesting the weaving of some Indian legend about that Smoky Hill stream. From this aspect had the red man, doubtless, derived the name. In the shade of a cottonwood on a bank you could listen pensively to the pleasant threnody of the clicking leaves and mourning-dove notes and try to forget the rasping noise of locusts sawing through the calorific air.

A cattle stampede sometimes brought relief from any boredom—longhorn steers in a crazed flight, like buffaloes. The scene became often illuminated at night by the widespread wall of flame of a prairie fire which, once in a while, seemed to be sweeping in on the town, causing breathless anxiety. A township might burn over. The giant blaze would lick the sky, leap creeks, race along like mad when fanned by a breeze. A grand tableau! Yet

how like some appalling monster driving ahead scared people, cattle, wolves, antelopes, rabbits!

A particular feature of the town life, nevertheless, gladdened. The family who could now afford a horse and buggy rode about the village on the Sabbath, and on evenings of the week sped off bumpily along the wavy rims of the hills to catch whiffs of cooler air. The noteworthy beau who could pay for a rig drove his girl prominently through the well-defined Texas Street, then for lack of other places to go might hie to a distant creek where some thrifty "Dutchman" kept for sale buttermilk cooling in a spring house. Therein the couple could sit and exclaim, also, over the merits of crystal, cold spring water, not plentiful on the prairie domain.

A description of the innumerable twists in the character of this pioneer population in the Desert would appear impossible, but writers at a long distance in space and time usually dispose of the subject as a unit in a few sentences. Superficially the settlers seemed to be the same, never mixed nor changing. Yet the shifting exceptions, discordant traits, uneven proportions, among the strains and influences, jutting out though intertwining, made up a composite defying a complete, smooth planing down. We are offering snap shots of it from different directions, different viewpoints, without troubling too much about a consistent or harmonious result.

To look at it from the standpoint of education. Often men regarded themselves sufficiently educated if they could read some, write a crude note and "figger" on

market reports. There was an underlying feeling against much instruction, the idea being often expressed that it militated against success: made "sissies!" Success meant the accumulation of much money or property. Rich men could be pointed out east and west who could not write their names. Persons with any kind of college experience had at times to be tactful about it to avoid being dubbed "stuck up" or "smart Alecks." Not a few parents were disposed on slight pretexts to withdraw their child from school for good. They readily thought that Billy or Susie had learned enough. To learn more might in some way hurt them.

This sentiment against trained enlightenment later burst out on the Plains against educated experts, especially Government experts. One would have thought this fact peculiar: In a Republic where public opinion governs and education stands as the vital prop and safeguard, many of these true Americans in blood and tradition gave small heed to information in books. It was, to a noticeable degree, a firm belief among this class, resulting from their bringing up, that by virtue of being Americans they ranked as superior humans and that, no matter how poor their equipment, they had been born adequately outfitted to wage the battle of life. Owing to their ample, stark self-reliance they considered it came natural to them to do almost anything sufficiently well—"good enough"—without much skilled preparation. The illiterate Texas cowboy, knowing only how to punch

steers, ride bucking bronchos and shoot, believed himself king of the universe.

But the year 1870, in this Mecca of the cattle country, witnessed a decided and gratifying advance in its citizenry. Some of the "upper crust" from Illinois, Ohio, New York, located there and elsewhere on the Plains. They filed additions to Abilene about this time, brought out many excellent families who bought town lots, all proceeding to make improvements of a desirable character not yet seen. Their stores and homes looked more like those in the East. They were bright people, of financial responsibility, well educated, socially bred, refined; their ladies, charming. That they should have come out into the rough Desert could only be explained by its expected money-making possibilities. This influx, with its keen business activity, became a boon and inspiration.

CHAPTER XIII

THE AGRICULTURAL PERIL

The western half of the United States is practically a desert. It presents bare mountains and arid levels. Lofty mountain ranges cause or are associated with desert conditions, and mountains cannot be removed. The water supply in that West is most meager. And a large part of that supply lies too low for agricultural use save in small spots at much expense. The natural reservoir sites are generally sunken and the task of lifting or conducting water for irrigation is heavy or costly. An abundant head of it is needed to irrigate even a minute dry area.

This half of our country will, therefore, never, so far as can be judged from past experience, be anything like densely populated. Nature is against much settlement. Even California, approaching half the size of what we have called the Plains, after nearly eighty years of development, an incredible amount of advertising and many extraordinary advantages, shows only a little over four million people, half being located in its two large cities. Nevada, not far behind in extent and almost as old in fame, brings forward about eighty thousand. The Rocky Mountain States and those to the west (a total of eleven vast States), representing one-third of our country, has

only about eleven million inhabitants. Forty per cent of them are in California, and there are but eight million in that whole domain of eleven States if we exclude the five leading cities. Belgium, one-thirteenth the size of California alone, boasts of an equal number.

Take enormous Colorado, our seventh State in area, one and two-thirds larger than New England. Nature endowed that empire with perhaps an unequaled variety and amount of what is required for an advanced civilization. Its gold and silver output has ranked among the largest outputs in the world. Among its other numerous metals are lead, zinc, copper, iron. The deposits of molybdenum are the most extensive in America. The marble and granite beds include statuary and building marbles together with the highest grades of granite. There are in a copious supply clay, cement, soft coal. Some hard coal is found. High grade oils are obtained and natural gas occurs in almost an unlimited quantity. The timber supply is large, and the irrigated grain and fruit equal the best. The Rocky Ford cantaloupe, unmatched by many half-flavored imitators the country over, was first grown and put on the market about 1885 by George W. Swink at Rocky Ford, Colorado, in an altitude of about four thousand feet.[1]

Colorado's invigorating climate is renowned for

[1] Rocky Ford is a classic name in the melon family. This cantaloupe is an irrigated, high altitude product under a brilliant, tonic atmosphere. It is round and typically four or five inches in diameter. It matures about August 12 and reaches our eastern markets not before the last of that month. Cantaloupes served there before then are never Rocky Fords. The flesh is firm and green, topped off by a yellowish surface, and of a rare sweetness and deliciousness.

healthfulness, its scenery superb, overawing, seemingly endless. Nearly four hundred of its mountain peaks reach thirteen thousand feet or over in height, being twice as lofty as the highest one east of the Mississippi (in North Carolina).

Yet Colorado has only about eight hundred thousand inhabitants outside of Denver. Why? Lack of adequate rainfall. That is about the only thing Nature failed sufficiently to provide.

The god of rain is disposed to rule as to density of population. Many people east of the Mississippi read of irrigation in the West and of expansive irrigation plans there. They think of that territory being transformed into a farm and garden empire. But the areas irrigated plus the areas where irrigation projects are under way or contemplated would altogether be, we may say, almost infinitesimal compared with the total expanse. Had the western half of the United States a normal annual precipitation, who could question that our nation would before many generations possess a population equal to at least half that of Europe and, because of our geographical compactness, detached situation and unity of race and Government, be able easily to rule the world much as the Roman empire ruled it in its day?

In the last pages we have dealt with village immigration and residents characteristic, we may well assume, of the virgin Plains. We come now to real grips with the agricultural enigma there in 1870.

For various reasons the Government wished settled

up its so-called great Desert lying astride the central line of our country and mostly in its western half. The oft-maligned United States Congresses in the decade of the 1860's had passed the Homestead Acts, beginning with the Act of 1862 granting to any citizen not over one hundred and sixty acres—a quarter section—of the unoccupied western public land held to be virtually worthless. The only conditions: settlement, cultivation and a continuous occupancy as a place of residence for five years. In making his original entry a citizen merely filed his affidavit as to the quarter section wanted and paid a total fee of five or ten dollars. His final entry entitled him to a certificate of purchase and in due course a United States patent. The land became a gift. It should become his permanent home.

Preëmption Right laws followed, under which a citizen could buy a quarter section at generally from one dollar and a quarter to two dollars an acre and was not required to settle on it, except for six months, nor to cultivate it. Besides, there existed the Military Land Warrants, popularly called Soldiers' Claims, enabling any veteran of the Civil War to receive a Warrant from the Government for a specified part of the public domain without payment. The public freely sold or transferred these Warrants or Claims. They already formed a part of the beginning of an extended land office business. There should also be mentioned the Public School lands and the Railroad Land Grants. All of this program was designed, under the active and powerful support of the

Government, to populate that Great American Desert in a rush.

Few members of the Government had been that far west. None appeared to realize the droughtiness of this land which looked fine on maps in Washington. Even the Texas Cattle Trade so far cut a small figure in the whole question. Its droves came in summer, still more disposed to ravage the districts through which they passed, were speedily sold and shipped out of the country, the proceeds going chiefly to Texas, Kansas City and Chicago, not back to the Plains.

In this period after the Civil War the civilization of raw American territory had, indeed, entered upon a new and important stage. The striking aspects could be seen not only in the Government land project but in the construction of railroads through immense, undeveloped areas. The railroads needed population and its traffic for their own corporative profits. To enable these companies to prosper, imperative was it that the wastes be inhabited apace. So the railroads seconded the efforts of the Government about filling up the Plains. A vast, vague boom gradually started.

Newcomers wanted evidently to behold a country where the soil was claimed to be forty feet deep! When on the spot the arrivals laughed over the humbug, if they had not already forgotten the subject. The soil looked plenty deep enough. A laugh, a joke, is sometimes a good way to persuade strangers to stay. To people from the East any kind of land seemed worth a hun-

dred cents an acre. They "reckoned" it ought to be easy, anyhow, to sell out the following season at a little profit and go on west. The ore in the mountains and near the Pacific Coast, the adventure of crossing the Desert, enticed all. The Plains marked only a stepping stone to the magical occident for people transient at heart. And their roving spirit became encouraged in a country suitable for roving cattle.

Most of the immigrants on the Plains were still bent on making a small roll of money by not much mental or physical effort. They facilely speculated. The scant information about the weather spread a reputation attracting those wanting to take things with light hands. A Nature arid and accordingly a siren or a virago by turns was evidently as ready to destroy a well-farmed crop as a poor-farmed crop. Little agriculture and that of the slackest kind, the holding of land for a rise, or the grazing of cattle free on somebody else's territory, equally justified considerable loafing. The idea appeared advisable to scratch over a few acres down by a river or creek. This wouldn't result in much, yet small the cost in "spondulics" or "elbow grease."

The original squatters remarked about such "horse sense." No use to "buck maw Nature!" She always meant what she said as anybody could see by looking out of the car windows west of "Topeky" and Omaha. If you acted as if you didn't believe her, she would knock you endways by a drought or what came to be called a blizzard and make small fuss about either. "Don't monkey with

a buzz saw, as the feller said." That tramp philosophy suited many who, as shown, didn't want much because of the bother of looking after it. They hoped for enough "truck" to get through the season. Let next year look out for itself.

In 1870 the Plains, fifteen per cent of the United States, was yet designated, by those apparently knowing it best, including the potent cattle interests, as essentially a desert, ever unfit for general farming and the better grades of livestock.

Prior to 1870 it was doubtful if a single excellent farmer, intending to do nothing except farm earnestly, had arrived on the Plains. Settlers, as a rule, brought only enough resources to last a couple of years. Then what? The one fortifying hope always remained: you could sell out to new dupes from the East and depart. What did it all look like, in truth, but a direful speculation out of which the gas would sooner rather than later deflate? When the gigantic tragedy ended in a collapse, who would be to blame? Was Kansas again doomed to be "bleeding?"

While the immigration had been desultory, the influential Texan rangers annually invaded the region in ever fuller, more organized force and in the one productive season—the early summer. Despite the frequent and great losses attending the traffic, the Texan herds displayed large, tangible riches, ready money, and, concentrated at Abilene, could be sharply contrasted with the possessions of the Northerners with hardly more than

slim equities in sterile lands. The visible affluence and authority on the one hand altogether over-matched what could be offered on the other, the Lone Star patricians always assuming that the country belonged to them, at least in the warm months. The farmers? A kind of "poor white trash"—misguided interlopers! As for the townsmen, catering to the Cattle Trade, could *they* be formidable antagonists at present or in the future?

The Texas cattle industry, with its Castilian longhorns, mustangs, and booted and spurred *vaqueros,* was Spanish in nature, having drifted through Mexico up into southwestern United States, especially Texas. In George Wharton Edwards's "Spain" (1926, p. 27) we read, in his speaking of the dusty great plains of Léon in northwestern Spain,

> . . . where herds of cattle range in terrifying phalanxes, tossing their great horns, and fiercely bellowing as they are driven along by the herdsmen who shout and gesticulate and skillfully hurl stones at the leaders from their slings.

What is this like, even yet to-day in backward Spain, but a drove of Texan longhorns on our own Plains in the 1860's and 1870's, driven along by Texan cowboys, except that there were no stones on our Desert to sling? That Iberian life continued here to be Spanish-American, its *vaquero* becoming the American cowboy, *la reata,* the lariat, *barranco,* the ravine, and so on. With it became introduced the practice of branding animals to identify them in their wild, roaming state. What made these in-

vaders, their life, their dress, habits, customs, their business, appear more intimidating on the Plains, in Abilene, was this foreign aspect. They looked rather like Spaniards and Mexicans penetrating the territory of peaceful northern Americans who had never seen the like.

The cattle czars now loudly foretold disaster on our Plains. They gazed upon the whole project as a terrible hoax played by puff ball statesmen and pot-house politicians in Washington who warmed their cushioned seats while planning about a desert where they had never been. The Texas stockmen were joined by jeering Kansans interested in livestock. The latter, their journals, denounced it all as folly. Our cynical rough and ready observer in Abilene can be quoted.

"This ain't no country for little two by four farmers. The homestead plan the Gov'ment is shufflin' the deck fer is the biggest skin game goin'. They'll knock up the hull country, fencin' it. Farmin' ain't no real gent's play nohow. It's work from dawn to night an' squeeze-penny at that. Huh, the measly clodhoppers has to walk. A livestock feller can ride round like a proprietor. He has only to see the stock grazes well or is fed twict a day, an' the balance of the time is his'n to enjoy life an' the exercisin' of his brains. The big thing about the Plains is that you don't have to feed stock. It can rustle for itself if it comes to that. You can yoke it up with step-maw Nature an' the pair, if they wants to, can make the dollars crawl into your jeans without you're hardly havin' to look on. It almost makes a hard-shell Babtis' like me

(a wink) sniffle to see these loony aggerculturalists in this Desert comin' to git their fingers burnt an' their crops too. Another chapter, gents, in the hist'ry of that air crazy institution, to wit an' namely, Uncle Sam's Cheap John Congress."

In this central eastern part of the Plains where the Texas Cattle Trade hummed in the grass season, the longhorns made now greater havoc in their course. Steers raided the little gardens and spring crops, tore down fences, chased women and children into dugouts. A farmer would go out for a reckoning with the imperial Texan drovers who, disgusted with what they naturally held to be attempts to ruin the Plains, were not disposed to be amicable. Sometimes they fought off or bluffed off a granger, sometimes they bought him off to their hot displeasure. Such results left the Lone Star grandees in a mood, when they reached their terminus, Abilene, to be gratified by the high hand with which their cowboys wished to carry on things there.

The Cattle Trade, while it benefited financially its capital in summer, became the despair of the settlers. Old-timers grinned all the more. "What use to plow much? to fence? The longhorns will destroy it all." No granger, accordingly, before the time of immigrant colonies, called his place a farm. It was a homestead, a preemption, a claim, a ranch.

We may emphasize that these first pioneers had not gone west on a crusade or for a rowdy type of adventure or even as a kind of "lark" for the particular benefit of

twentieth-century, hair-lifting fiction or flamboyant wild-west productions on the stage. The sole object—money! —as explained. If no money made, little could be lost since little had been taken along.

CHAPTER XIV

THE AGRICULTURAL PERIL, CONTINUED

How could farmers on the ground make a decent living?

There was the idea of feeding livestock through the winter. For, steers not finding an advantageous sale by fall—what could be done with them? Texas lay too far away for a return drive. An owner could only let them loose on the prairies to take care of themselves. In storms they could seek the thin timber along the streams. Heavy losses must occur yet the undertaking cost nothing. In the spring, the round-ups, and it would be an exciting "gamble" to find how many animals weathered over or could be found at all.

J. G. McCoy early thought of this winter program. Stock sheltered in the open but among the cottonwoods and undergrowths of a bend of a creek or river, and fed, would be expected to sell well. The expense figured light as no structures needed to be built. And then the buffalo grass!

Such an enthusiast set forth the rare properties of this yield which fitted into the scheme as if devised for it by Providence. Buffalo grass matured in the spring, finely textured and velvety, reflecting the colors of the

sky with a mild bluish-green hue. Presently it dried up brown under the beating sun, yet retained all its nourishment during the whole year while much rain makes soft, washy leaves and stems. Buffalo grass, too, was not more than three or four inches long, being tough, lightly durable and, unlike longer grasses, seeming wisely fashioned to stand trampling by cattle.

Did not everything show to such zealots how clearly Jehovah meant the Plains to be a cattle instead of an agricultural country? He favored, as claimed from reading the Bible, people with herds. He dealt directly only with humanity in such a poor kind of region as Judea instead of rich Egypt or rich Babylonia. Those ancient patriarchs, prophets, law-givers, who received the inspirations from on High, at least dwelt in a livestock section even if they did not, like their neighbors, own property on the hoof. The former were the sanctified. No farmers nor business men entered into this Divine intercourse. The Holy Ghost understood and preferred the livestock occupation and He liked the sort carried on in arid, non-irrigated Palestine and on the arid, non-irrigated American Plains. Hence the latter was bound to thrive as a cattle realm under the direct guidance of Heaven, the Scriptures having foretold it in messages not only writ in large but so freely in terms of chattels.

The plan of feeding stock through winters proved at once a failure or impossible for settlers. While drovers or eastern men with capital undertook it with varying success on the plan of full feeding or "roughing

through," settlers had not sufficient money. Then, too, the clumps of timber in the bends of streams were too small and few for holding any considerable number of head out of storms. The bare, fenceless uplands, wind-swept, could not be thought of by the local pioneers. Besides, the very limited amount of produce raised made its prices dear. All this, together with the inevitable losses by death, the expense of shipment, the commissions to be paid and the high-rates of money—everything in face of a fluctuating market as liable to be low as high—rated such ventures as forbidding. No winter farming, no winter feeding.

Thus the jumpy conditions on the Plains and of its people. Furthermore, a hopeful season was apt to be followed by a setback. Three successive days of hot winds from the Staked Plain and the Panhandle sufficed to burn up any extensive crop. Lofty expectations seemed soon to land on parched, hard ground. Yet the cheer of the persistent sunlight possessed human breasts; never the gloom, sullen gloom, of rainy, cold countries.

Up to about this time the settlers on the Plains had come singly, detached, all strangers. They were of a stripe to hear of it or clutch a circular or leaflet and, guided by such brief or loose information, depart for the destination advertised. They traveled on vaguely but trustfully toward the evening star.

The year 1870 witnessed not only a decided improvement in the character of the individual immigration into towns, districts. Among this farm influx there became

now introduced a feature which exemplified a material and increasing worth in the Desert. This feature, so exceptional as it then appeared, was shown in the little colonies immigrating hither to make a habitation and a home. They represented neighborhood or religious or reform groups averaging perhaps fifty people. In 1870 came significantly into Kansas at least one Prohibition colony, of fifty persons. All the settlers mentioned above hailed or were to hail from Illinois, Michigan, Ohio, Pennsylvania, even Tennessee, and graded as serious and competent farmers.

Each assemblage would have one or two leaders, men of parts. Near the Abilene capital settled, for instance, a Buckeye colony, of course from Ohio, headed by V. P. Wilson who started a newspaper in the town in 1870 and became an enterprising citizen of the best type. A township or creek-side would be selected, the land there taken up, and preparations and homes made to begin agriculture in earnest. Each group would soon claim a post-office and be a political factor, an organized influence, where none had been. These were all stanch folk of some means who, unawares, did not hesitate to try to prove the "Great American Desert" a misnomer.

Later, on the Plains, such new colonies could be seen as large, financially strong and sometimes of a foreign religious race like the River Brethren (of Swiss origin) from Pennsylvania or the so-called "Russian" Mennonites. The former were Baptists and allied to the Mennonite denomination. Such communities brought

their peculiarities of dress, their pious customs and habits, all long clung to. These racial or religious settlements retained, too, their manner of speech and stood out as loath to consolidate with the general run of people.

There could be found also Irish neighborhoods with their churches and priests, and German districts. The Germans were mainly "Pennsylwanee Deutsch." They spoke English very poorly, showed themselves to be toiling, saving, law-abiding and an obstinate group apart. Large enough in number were they to mix their Teutonic idioms into the current speech where the result became stupidly funny. Yankees would jocularly say they must go into the country "out," or ask, "Vot for a steer is dot?" This helped corrupt the English tongue, far enough already from being pure. Yet the "Dutch" could be noted as one of the earliest classes to give signs of really prospering. They stayed at home and labored on their claims, using what they couldn't sell while Americans sold what they couldn't use. You loaned twenty-five per cent more to a German than to a Yankee farmer.

Mayor Henry was the only one among the ambitious citizens of Abilene who could plow a straight furrow. As a land agent he owned and otherwise controlled much land for the purpose of selling it to newcomers. Like other reputable land brokers, he tried to keep his conscience clear by such statements as these:

"No one knows what can or will be made out of the Plains. The cattlemen do appear to stand in the way of

any decided farming program. But all I have is invested out here. If you believe in the United States, as I do, must you not believe that smooth land with fertile soil will some day be worth more than the pittance you are paying? Land has always gone up in value in America. It must always go up—even if the owner goes up first." Little witticisms, as remarked, often eased up the closing of land deals.

Henry's training and tastes, as well as his business, caused him to face the agricultural puzzle. He had no inclination to confine himself to one tract as a farmer. His concern was about the outcome, the prosperity, of the whole country. J. G. McCoy, the protagonist of the Texas cattle industry, looked naturally at the puzzle from the livestock point of view. Henry grew alarmed about the agricultural possibilities. The appearances, the arguments, lay on the side of cattlemen. They controlled journals, legislators, public officials. They had the cash. But Henry could not see that the livestock industry would make the Plains "blossom as the rose." The little towns could not amount to much if not backed by well-settled and thriving countrysides. The Cattle Trade, however extensive, would support only a small local population. Its shipments could be made from a mere hamlet, as even Abilene still was. Grazing on the public domain, as the land system, meant only an excuse for the desert idea.

The locating of responsible groups of people thrust

forward the agricultural peril as greater, more grave. The earlier settlers, bringing little, as seen, could lose but little if compelled to leave, except some time, and they didn't count their time of any particular value. If anything happened to the Plains now with its colonies, the damage would be awful. For them to come west with substance and have to quit it in destitution would be a heart-breaking spectacle.

To add to the perilousness of the Texan situation alone was the *quasi* official exodus, on to the Plains, of the large numbers of ex-soldiers, very handy, of course, with the guns they carried with them from battlefields. The ending of the war dovetailed into the grand Government policies of settling its western lands. Young men east of the Mississippi, returning home after two or three years in the campaigns, found themselves crowded out by those who stayed behind and secured the best opportunities and positions. Land and other assets there had gone up in value in the war boom. The meager pay in the army counted as nothing for coping with the circumstances. Moreover, while the soldier boy came from the front as a noble fellow to sing songs about and hurrah over, he appeared not very welcome as a prospective citizen for peaceful activities around his old haunts. The adventurous life of shifting warfare somewhat disqualified him, people thought, for close or stationary competition in the populous East. Seeing this state of things and used to looking to Washington for his money, his

orders and counsel, naturally did he take his waiting sweetheart in marriage and go west where he could begin life anew on free Government lands.

So, that soldier body was pushing and being pushed into the Desert. Old residenters there could croak and warn as much as they liked; the pessimists could slander the climate, pretend to "cuss" the dangerous existence, the deprivations—it could not be worse than fighting. General Sherman's definition of war presented few terrors for boys who had worn the Blue. This younger generation readily looked forward, in fact, to another campaign of hardship and hardtack. And were they not descendants of the intrepid, sinewy American pioneer stock so famed in song and story?

While Uncle Sam encouraged them to populate this arid wild, "Uncle" Horace Greeley and other sages also said, Young man, go West! It may not have been, on their part, entirely ingenuous or unselfish advice. Did they not wish, as some wondered, to get the bright youth out of their own country? There would then be less fear of being ousted from their own soft armchairs by adolescent rivals with new tricks up their sleeves that old men could not learn.

The soldiers made more acute the dread of armed conflict on the Plains—a general war. All you needed to do was to run up Old Glory and out were they with army muskets, once more peering about for Johnny Rebs. Who should be the "boss"—the Union plowboy

on his own land or the Confederate cowboy on land not his?

True, Marshal Smith daily showed an up-building procedure in keeping down the rebellious Texans in the capital. His continued enlisting of the Abilene proprietors in the cause of stability contributed a still more satisfactory prospect there. The idea of the most profit lying in the channel of peace penetrated ever more seriously. The future of the Plains ought, after all, to contain somehow the factors of solidarity and solidity. But Smith might be assassinated any day, and then a murderous abyss would yawn again right under the feet of the whole Desert population.

Under the agricultural crux Mayor T. C. Henry carried a heavy load of care in this summer of 1870. It seemed that some kind of a crash must come quickly. A ray of hope shone down on him. He read daily in the market reports that Minnesota winter wheat now topped the market in Chicago. It stood as grade No. 1, the rare perfection, by which other samples were rated. This wheat figured as comparatively a new thing. If the prairies of Minnesota would raise such a winter crop, Henry wondered if the prairies to the south and west might not do so. It appeared a far-fetched idea, but something had to be risked at once to avert an apparently impending bankruptcy of the population.

The result? A little patch of newly broken ground. Harrowed, smoothed over. Not possible grain was sown there? The preposterous notion! Yet here lay this sleep-

ing, secluded patch of tilled virgin soil. No tender blades soon. And if they should sprout, how long could they contend against the dry weather, the breezes blowing the dirt from their roots, the occasional freezing winds?

Mayor Henry had sowed secretly this five acres to winter wheat in imitation of what went on in Minnesota. He told no one about it. He cautioned our family to keep it quiet. He did not like to be ridiculed for the attempt. He did not relish being called crazy. His winter wheat plot lay in the valley. He hoped the bottoms *might* be winter farmed.

CHAPTER XV

TRAGIC DEATH OF MARSHAL TOM SMITH

Abilene became used to the fact that Tom Smith, single-handed, had conquered the town. He held Texas Street in his official palm. He demonstrated how the citizens could live safely beside the Texans and continue to derive from their commerce a vital profit.

Yet hardly had its mayor sown his little acreage of winter wheat than a sudden and fell blow staggered Abilene. On November 2, 1870, Marshal Tom Smith was slain—and not by Texans, but by two Scotch grangers out in the country!

Abilene sank under sackcloth and ashes.

From Charles F. Gross.

> Smith was deserted by (Sheriff) McDonald in his (Smith's) last extremity. I can see him (McDonald) now as he rode up to the front door of Drovers' Cottage, dismounted, came into the barroom and leaning against the bar with a drink of whisky in his hand blubbered out the yarn he told. There being no one to dispute him, the story had to go, but I can still recall the looks that passed between men present who, I knew, had been raised from birth to eat six-shooters. It was so rank that no one could say a word. I'll never forget it . . . Tom was square and a gentleman.

W. S. Stambaugh, another friend of Smith, wrote[1] that Tom rode through Detroit and asked him the way to the murderer McConnell's dugout. Stambaugh had eaten dinner with McConnell a few days before at the Detroit hotel, and he warned Smith of the mood of the assassin.

> Smith rode on to the dugout. In an hour a young man rode into Detroit, saying that McConnell had murdered him (Smith). I jumped on a horse and rode to the McConnell dugout. It was built into a hillside, and the door was at the end of a sort of ditch. Smith entered alone and what happened, no one knows. Two shots were heard. McConnell was shot through the hand, Smith in the breast. They grappled and struggled into the open air, Smith, with a mortal wound, giving McConnell a fearful battle. Smith got McConnell down and was either getting the handcuffs out of his pocket or attempting to put them on his prisoner when Miles, who was McConnell's partner, came up behind and, taking an axe, buried its blade in Smith's head, striking three blows and almost severing the head from the body. The two men, Miles and McConnell, then fled. Smith's assistant, named McDonald (the sheriff), had exchanged shots with Miles on the outside of the dugout, and McDonald fled to Abilene for reinforcements.

The Mayor's account in the Globe Democrat of St. Louis thirty years later.

> Smith was killed while attempting the arrest of a murderer about three miles from Abilene who had driven off the sheriff and posse. It appears that a couple of Scotchmen had had trouble with an Irishman over some of the latter's cat-

[1] Kansas Historical Collections, vol. 9, p. 526.

tle destroying some of their corn. A herd law had just gone into effect, and as there were no fences, trouble of that character was common. One of the Scotchmen, after a wordy war with the Irishman, deliberately killed him, and with his partner took refuge in their dugout and defied arrest. The sheriff and his crowd had been driven off, and came in town for more help. Smith, who loved adventure, and seemed to court danger, at once volunteered to take a couple of men with him and bring the murderer in. When they approached the dugout, it seems, one of the Scotchmen was in the rear chopping wood. The one inside discovered the approach and cut loose with a Winchester, one of the shots taking effect in Smith's breast. The two deputies fled, but Smith, desperately wounded as he was, sprang into the cabin, threw the murderer on the floor, and had nearly succeeded in handcuffing him when the other Scotchman rushed in and with one blow of the ax, completely severed Smith's head from the body. An examination afterward proved that the wound from the Winchester would have been fatal, and his desperate fight after receiving it showed plainly the quality of the courage of this remarkable man. Poor Smith! After facing so many dangers it seemed hard that he should lose his life as did his successor, Wild Bill, by an assassin's blows from the rear.

We quote from the mayor, under date of some four years after the foregoing, what appears in the Kansas Historical Collections (vol. 9, p. 530).

Sunday, October 23, 1870, on Chapman creek, Andrew McConnell shot and killed John Shea. Shea snapped a pistol twice at McConnell, and while attempting to cock it for the third time McConnell shot and killed him. An investigation resulted in the discharge of McConnell on the plea of self-defense. But the neighbors were not satisfied, and legal measures of a different character were insti-

tuted, and warrants for the arrest of McConnell and another man, named Miles, were given Marshal Smith to serve. Wednesday, the 2d day of November, accompanied by a deputy named McDonald, Marshal Smith went to the dugout on Chapman to make the arrest. McConnell was informed that he was under arrest, when he instantly shot at Smith. A scuffle ensued, and Smith was killed. A vigorous fusillade followed between McConnell and Miles and Deputy McDonald. The murderers secured the horses of the officers and started off, but while McDonald went to arouse the neighbors they returned to the dugout and with an ax severed Smith's head from the body. For this crime McConnell and Miles served fourteen years in the penitentiary.

The members of the town government convened the next morning after his death and adopted resolutions of esteem for our "valued citizen, esteemed friend, and brave executive officer, Thomas J. Smith." November 4 a public funeral took place. Business was entirely suspended, and every manifestation of profound grief was exhibited. Slowly the long concourse of citizens, led by "Silverheels," Smith's favorite saddle-horse, followed the remains to the (cemetery).

From J. B. Edwards's account in the *Abilene Chronicle* in 1896:

Smith who was then a deputy U. S. Marshal went out with McDonald (the sheriff). Arriving near the dugout (of McConnell and Miles), they hitched their horses, Smith going straight to the dugout and not paying any attention to warnings made by McConnell to enter. He went in, passing a man by the name of Miles at the door. Miles made his business to keep McDonald from going inside. Raising a carbine at McDonald, he snapped it at him and McDonald backed away. Miles kept trying to get his

gun to go off, but it persistently refused to do so, and yet McDonald was so much afraid of a gun, even of that kind, that he made no effort in any way to get in where Smith was. No one except McConnell and Tom Smith were in the dugout when a shot was fired inside. As quick as McDonald heard it he took to his heels and fled across the prairies. Leaving his horse where he had tied him, he made for the nearest claim, one-half mile or more west, and finding a pony, mounted him and came to Abilene as fast as possible, reporting that Smith was killed. In a very few minutes a posse (including myself) was off for the scene of conflict. On arriving there we found Smith's body lying some ten yards from the dugout with his head severed from his body excepting the skin on the back of the neck. McConnell and Miles had fled.

Now comes the sequel of McDonald being such a coward in not using his own weapon on Miles when, after repeated efforts, he saw that Miles's carbine would not go off. Before McDonald and Smith got to McConnell's place they passed, about a half-mile this side, the claim of Mr. Haines. Knowing their business he also went along with them and during the whole *mêlée* stood just on the outside and saw the whole proceedings between Miles and McDonald, and said that after McDonald took to his heels Smith brought his man, McConnell, outside the door, when Miles, clubbing his gun, struck him down and the two together dragged him farther out and there used the ax, severing his head from his body. Smith had also been shot in the body, probably while on the inside. . . .

Poor Tom Smith, one of the bravest men ever on the border or in the West! Modest, quiet, commanding the respect of both good and bad men alike, successfully keeping our city, overrun as it was with Mexicans, gamblers and cowboys, as well as lewd women, quiet and orderly, never using his weapons of death the whole (summer) season, he laid down his life at the age of about thirty two while doing his duty as an officer of the law. He was mur-

dered by two desperate men angered over the trivial matter of a few cattle running over an unfenced prairie.

The above accounts, given years afterward, naturally vary. We may describe more circumstantially the murder of Marshal Smith according to what was at the time currently reported in Abilene.

Sheriff McDonald belonged to an uncertain class. Little had been known of him and his antecedents. When the final necessity came for arresting the two farmers who slew a neighbor, he asked Smith to help. As the official pair drew near the slayers' claim, about ten miles northeast of Abilene, they saw the two men working out in their field. The latter two, spying the riders and aware of what their coming meant, dropped their implements and made for the dugout in the middle of the tract. On reaching the spot Smith and the sheriff found that the other two had gone down into the dugout and shut the door. The former pair hitched their horses and descended the dirt steps. Tom took the warrant. He pushed open the door, followed by the sheriff, their pistols aimed. They saw the Scotchmen, who had taken stiff drinks, sitting at the other end of the room with guns across their knees.

The marshal read the warrant aloud. The struggle began in bringing the accused up and out on the ground which offered a larger, freer space for handcuffing. In the unavoidable changing about in the fight, McConnell was at length in Smith's hands, the other man in the sheriff's. Smith found difficulty, when once outdoors, in

getting his culprit down. Used to belligerent rowdyism, the latter put up a surprising resistance.

The other pair, a short distance away and back of the marshal, were at each other's throats. But when the sheriff saw the danger of being mastered, dismay seized him. He took to his heels. Terrified, he gave no warning cry. Tom, thinking the sheriff in control of his man, paid no heed to them. He had his own hands pretty full. At length he held McConnell flat on the ground and took out the irons for his wrists.

Miles, the partner, driving off the sheriff, picked up an ax—stole up behind the marshal kneeling astride McConnell's body—prostrated him by a blow on the head. Tom rose. Another vicious blow on the head prostrated him again. The second time he rose, so mighty his will power. A third prostrating swing on the head enabled McConnell to get on his feet. He threw himself on the body to pin it down. Miles cut off the head. It hung by a shred of skin.

The sheriff, after escaping to a safe distance, turned and watched the encounter. Seeing its horrible climax, he hurried over the hills to Abilene. He gave out the news, claiming that the two had been overcome and he could only save himself by "skedaddling."

"Tom Smith killed? Killed out in the country by two farmers!"

False rumors of the marshal's death occasionally spread before. People did not credit such a story now until his lifeless body, lying on a bed of straw under

branches in a wagon, appeared, as I saw it, in the streets that evening. The general comment:

"That measly dog of a sheriff led his friend into the jaws of death and skipped out. If it hadn't been for him Tom Smith would have brought in the two men alone. The coward showed his fear by wanting the marshal to go along."

Everybody was appalled, then enraged. Vials of wrath descended on the head of the sheriff. The townsmen clamored to have the three murderers hung. A posse organized to take the two Scotchmen—double-dyed assassins. By the time it reached the dry claim the Scotchmen had escaped. Eventually were they captured and their sentence to a long imprisonment instead of death far from met the demands of an outraged people.

Tom Smith dead! The deepest gloom blanketed the little municipality. What of Abilene? What would become of it? Alarm for its safety again assailed all hearts. Wouldn't the cowboys exult next summer? Wouldn't they get out their six-shooters and raid? The town being in mourning, the citizens couldn't talk of anything but Tom Smith dead—his head hacked off.

The funeral. Abilene had had an abject day of fright. It now had an abject day of grief. The services were held in the little frame Baptist church at half past ten o'clock in the forenoon—the first church. Thence the procession moved toward the graveyard.

I recall it all vividly. Behind the hearse, banked with

branches and flowers, walked the dead marshal's iron-gray horse, Silverheels, saddled and bridled as he had left it. Tom's pearl-handled brace of revolvers, presented to him by the community, hung in their holsters from the pommel. Crape fluttered from hats, arms, bosoms. All proceeded on foot to do their highest and humblest honors to their revered protector. The file of people wound through Texas Street where the marshal had patroled in such local prominence. Then across the railroad track the line trailed through the north or civilian part of the straggling village. Finally the concourse mounted the gentle slope of the hill on whose breast, upraised to the sky, spread the small prairie grass cemetery.

By an open grave the mourners crowded around. Over its top the coffin was slid and remained supported there. The national colors draped it. There stretched across also the motto of the State—*Ad Astra per Aspera*—as if more fitting than for any other man who had died in Kansas for its good name.

The residents seemed much like dumb, animated monuments. No music. Not a voice could be heard. The only sound—muffled scufflings of hesitating, respecting feet through the prairie grass! From the faces of the men you could judge that the end of things had come for them and theirs. Women appeared ready to cry and boys and girls clung to their parents. The coffin was lowered. The first hopeless clods fell dully upon it. Flowers and

sprigs dropped into the forlorn cavity. Women wept. Men stirred and batted their eyelids hard to hide emotions.

It was a simple grave with a simply ornamented board for the headstone. During the long years afterward, as Abilene prospered and little thought of its early history,—old-time residents passing from the stage to be succeeded by new ones unfamiliar with the town's past, —the mound became neglected. It sank in, grew rank with coarse weeds, its headboard and picket fence went down, and the name with them. Any memory of this gallant savior of Abilene had all but passed from minds.

J. B. Edwards wrote me (March 10, 1924):

> Thirty-four years and six months after he (Tom Smith) was buried, I secured a new location in the cemetery, which I believed a better place, and had his remains removed, attending to same myself. When we dug down to the coffin, we found same to be a cast iron, metallic one. After removing it from the grave, I opened the lid over the face. Under the lid was a glass. After cleaning the glass, there was Tom Smith in every way as perfect as he was when put in coffin, as were also the burial robes. I have often wondered if we had in any way admitted air to the inside, whether the remains would have remained so or would they have fallen down into dust.

From another letter from Edwards to me (February 4, 1924):

> I am sending with this a photo . . . of a granite boulder which I secured from Granite Mountain in Oklahoma many years ago, and caused to be erected over Tom Smith's

Monument to Marshal Tom Smith in Abilene Cemetery. A granite bowlder from Oklahoma. On its bronze plate: Died a Martyr to Duty, Nov. 2, 1870, a Fearless Hero of Frontier Days who in Cowboy Chaos Established the Supremacy of the Law.

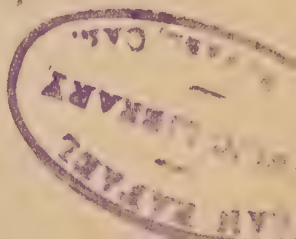
grave. This was done in May, 1904, and done, too, wholly by my efforts. Ceremonies were held for the occasion on Decoration Day, May 30, 1904, attended by a large number of people, with addresses by T. C. Henry and W. S. Stambaugh. Your brother, T. C. Henry, was mayor of Abilene in 1870 and he it was who secured the services of Smith to be city marshal in the month of June, 1870.

From the Abilene papers of May 31, 1904, can be gleaned the following paragraph:[1]

> On Decoration Day in 1904, memorial exercises were held over the grave of Thomas James Smith in the Abilene cemetery. Under the leadership of J. B. Edwards, an old and well-known citizen, a boulder had been brought from Oklahoma and on a lot which the city gave, the remains, after thirty four years, were removed to a new plot. Through the glass in the metal casket Smith's features looked as distinct as when he died. He had received the largest salary ever paid an Abilene marshal—two hundred and twenty-five dollars a month and half the fines.
>
> On the monument is a bronze plate:
>
> THOMAS J. SMITH
> MARSHAL OF ABILENE, 1870
> DIED A MARTYR TO DUTY NOV. 2, 1870
> A FEARLESS HERO OF FRONTIER DAYS
> WHO IN COWBOY CHAOS
> ESTABLISHED THE SUPREMACY OF LAW.

Marshal Smith avoided killing a man in Abilene. His mayor said he never saw Smith's weapons when the latter stood on duty. He would likely have survived had he imitated Wild Bill and shot down the slayers, not

[1] For an elaborate account of these proceedings see Kansas Historical Collections, vol. 9, p. 526.



attempting, in contrast to a true peace official, to save their lives for a court trial. And he was deserted by a cowardly fellow officer in the thick of a fight.

Historians, writers of wild-west fiction, theatrical producers, in quest of an ideal frontier hero of an effective, clean, ennobling type instead of demoralizing or unmoral figures such as Wild Bill became, might remember Tom Smith of Abilene who, alone, first mastered the earliest thorough-going outlaw town on the turbulent Plains and established a reign of harmony and security.

CHAPTER XVI

WINTER AGAIN

The cattle metropolis faced another tedious winter and with the old ache and dread over what the next Texan summer would bring to the once more defenseless town. The cold seasons could well be advertised as open, sunshiny, chiefly agreeable. Freezing spells did not linger long. Boys skated a few days at a time on the creek and occasionally on the river. When a chilling breeze swept up and down the gaunt, irregular beginnings of streets, the tin signs creaked lonesomely. A high zephyr in winter as in summer, in the loose, transient conditions, blew away signs, boxes, buckets, washings and other personal property lying about unattached firmly or not attached at all. People then made sport over going around and reclaiming possessions.

There was one good winter diversion for men. Hunting! Antelopes and rabbits the citizens went out after, and in the autumn the armed raids on the favorite but now rather rare prairie chicken, easy to shoot and prime to eat, became numerous. The grangers filled in the idle winter weeks by pursuing wild turkeys, coyotes, gray wolves.

The prevailing winds droning on the Plains inclined

men to shake off dreary feelings. Usually without overcoats they would run in cold weather across the street to other offices or stores, their shoulders shrugged together, hands stuffed in pockets, to swap care-freeing "yarns." They spent evenings habitually in their cheerless work places. For here they could "figger" or sit around stoves, talk about the country, retail gossip, tell stories of the great things they had done or seen, or get up a bet or a card game. Stores and offices were more to their liking, more inviting to them, than their little homes. These, in a majority of cases, represented a front room, back room and lean-to or shed kitchen, with the upstairs (if any) boarded up or blanketed off for sleeping purposes. The front room would probably contain a couch or bed supported by cracker boxes or other handy materials. Such a state did not favor sociability.

Sociability among families, between the sexes, proved a difficult matter to set going. All being strangers, uncertain about long remaining in the Desert, temporarily settled for the most part in homes, their social acquaintanceships formed slowly. Getting about at night was not usually pleasant nor, indeed, quite safe. The troublous, unlighted sidewalks or lack of them altogether, forcing people to take to the middle of the roads which might be rough, rutty, interfered with calling upon families in the evenings. We have noted this before.

The school and the church did mark the beginning of some Abilene households becoming known to one another. For in the school and Sunday school all pupils

herded, of course, on a common level and owing to their playing together in the homes a few of the average mothers thought of prinking up "a bit" and putting forward a formal foot before neighbors. In this preparing to skate out on the social ice there was slipping and tumbling over the exigencies of ceremoniousness. Such wives became alive to stirring questions—who should call first? when the calling hour? As the population came from various sections of the country with different standards or notably absence of standards about polite intercourse, no two ladies' columns in the few scattered, accessible homely prints agreeing, some hurts resulted. Certain every-day parents who had kicked against any delicacy breeding sensitiveness, and acted as if their hides grew thick, became, however, quite touchy at present about those pretending to put on a "broncho" style. There leaped up a conviction in this portion of the plain democracy: no one should hold his or her head higher than anybody else. And some offenders were unknowingly scolded by hot tongues in reddened faces.

Theretofore the association between the usual housewives in the homes had scarcely been more than the hasty back door variety such as sprang up by informing a mother that her roof was on fire or that one of her offspring had "fell" in the creek. But the bringing, through the school and church, of this inter-communication around to the front door, with its icy etiquette, caused social life in a few spots to be in a fair way of becoming as embattled as that of the Indians or Texans.

To change abruptly from a happy-go-lucky indifference or assertive unconstraint into primness naturally required a lot of patience. The scrapings, crackings, sounded loud. Men who never wore neckties nor often collars swore they "would never call on nobody if we have to choke ourselves to death by such contraptions." Their women lived corsetless to do their work easier and, in summer, to find comfort from the heat. Calling meant for them "cinching up." This, added to the new, vexatious matter of manners, inclined them to put off visits or finally to hold back from them altogether as "bad medicine." Notwithstanding all hindrances, the school and church turned out, as indicated, to be the initial social factors in town, and the equation became fussily muddled over in jerks and lapses toward a true though deferred solution.

The population of the capital was better than it appeared. Its few leading families could be remarked for their education and refinement, yet they held apart in that reserve which is the distinction of good breeding. Also they stayed indoors in winter for the practical reasons noted. In summer their sufficient excuse: the shamelessness and hazards of the Texan carousal. Thus the raw side of civilian Abilene life, as a whole, continued as most apparent, and certainly so to outside observers who could only see externals.

The common street, out-of-doors, goings-on provided necessarily the open standard for judging. The little depot (railroad station) stood for the social as well as

the civic center of the village in winter. Males in meeting the evening passenger from the East could here meet one another daily. Toward train time men, boys and dogs began to gather on or about the platform for the regular communal event. Since people liked to be seen expecting stamped communications or at least being honored by having the train postman hurl at them their Kansas City morning paper with the livestock market reports, here formed a routine preliminary, on the part of many, to following the mail bag to the post-office and there awaiting the distribution of letters and the opening of the window at last for deliveries.

One saw conspicuously the loafers on the depot platform, hoping for something "bustin' loose." Starved for a happening of some sort! And the platform, in addition, afforded their distinctive connection with the news of the outside world. You could pick out as their exaggerated propensity the alacrity to bet about anything or anybody. Wagering constituted the social function making men acquainted and friendly. It "gingered up" affairs. It required the all-admired backbone when the cash appeared. It showed which men had the best judgment. It gave office seekers and others desiring popularity a chance to offer a cigar or "set 'em up." It was considered altogether neighborly and a noble thing.

A favorite bet: how late the train? The vicinity would become aired by tobacco juice and sociable profanity. If two boys or dogs fell to fighting, money challenges flew through the atmosphere as to the winner. In case of a

long fight more men and boys rushed here at the sound of wagers shouted about. Even housewives and their daughters would leave preparations for the evening meal to run out in the street near the depot. There they halted, attracted yet shrinking. They would stand and wait to see the end while perhaps holding up their aprons to ward off the level shafts of the setting sun. Annoyances, hard feelings, defeats, seemed forgotten then in the yells of jubilation.

That pioneer language evidenced how strongly the betting habit was intrenched where the future looked shaky. Scarcely three sentences passed among men, women and children before "you bet your boots," "you bet your life" or equivalents, drummed the ear. As decent women did not wear boots, they lavishly wagered human lives, apparently of little value in this half-desperate region. Yet the singular feature! Persons ordinarily bet *others'* boots, lives and what-not instead of their own. It was "you bet." *You* take the risk. This came from no motives of selfish prudence or Satanism, but from the disposition to be good "pardners." It expressed a friendly caution or advice to the unwary.

Not absent appeared drinking customs that had invaded the Desert with their social cheer. Yet one found this true: women did not join in as in circles back East. They were far from imbibing. Truth to tell, the poisonous stuff here regaling men sickened a newly arrived eastern woman, being rank for her palate and stomach. Whisky, bringing a surcease of sorrow enjoyable to the

out-door sex, tasted unpleasant to the sex housed up. So while some wives accepted the liquor habit in husbands and other men of the minor drinking class, the latter had generally little thought but that the hard water was meant for the weaker half of humanity. Such males made themselves out as ill able to stand this desert life without fierce stimulants, yet few gave women their due for such a showing of better mortal stuff in not drinking.

People haunted the depot to inquire as to the next carload of coal, potatoes, apples. Comment would be provoked by the coming of a keg of Baltimore oysters, and those who felt it no extravagance considering their business prospects had then a feast. Otherwise canned cove oysters, little known, I believe, in modern days, brought stale recollections of the succulent East.

Everybody thought he or she must eat three stout meals a day or they were really sick, and mysterious stomach troubles became not uncommon. Some guessed they could be mainly ascribed to the hard drinking water. You saw how many residents dosed themselves with patent medicines since physicians, like experts and lawyers, seemed much scowled upon as ignoramuses more skilled in harming than in helping, and ordinarily described as quacks. A chronic complaint was sometimes regarded as a manifestation from Jehovah and, hence, to be borne with resignation as incurable and sacred.

The limitations of the life, its isolation, on these prairies wore on human hearts delicately attuned. But the outlook for the next summer's profits, in the exclud-

ing pursuit of money-making, tended always to "brace up." How little, indeed, could be found to think of except small material affairs!

Thin "strings" of landseekers would arrive, anxious to settle in time to raise spring crops, gardens. People with land to sell sat in their nooks on cold days. Teeth chattering, they extolled the salubrity of the climate on the Plains and urged the desirability of acquiring immediately some of the unexcelled soil. Strenuously would they, with cherished customers, speed out into the country in all weathers, ford creeks, give their teams rein to find the way back home in blinding storms. They worried along, now trustful then dejected, playing out their cards as adroitly as they knew how against the trump leads of their great antagonist—the Unknown. Would the Plains "last out"? The motto: "Never let a land sale linger, for something might any minute spile the sow belly or jerk up your picket pin and light out with it." Landsellers, as hinted, would stick to an arrival like a sand bur to the inside of a trouser leg.

Mayor Henry nervously haunted unseen his five acres of winter wheat. Now its little tender blades shot up to buffet the winds, to withstand the dry freezes, the ominous thaws. How could they make it go? Pitiful struggle in an unfriendly setting! Was it worth all the apprehension? The town cynics—how they would have scoffed had they known of it!

"The fellers in 'em good old days, along the Jordan took it easy drivin' livestock round, an' 'em as didn't,

fished fer their grub in the sea an' dreamt dreams of tuther an' better world—an' no *farmin'*. They didn't push Palestine. The Plains is all right too if you don't strain her." It still appeared to slack personalities much happier to dream in the Desert and await immigrants with cash for bargains.

CHAPTER XVII

OPTIMISTS

On the Plains the terms optimist and pessimist could be easily made confusing by the stickler. What we have said in Chapter VII being, I think, true, the optimist could be defined as one wanting to sell out and a pessimist as an optimist in the process of buying. In short, it was clever and proper to seem optimistic when a seller and pessimistic when a buyer—a mixed-up proceeding of sincerity and pretense as old as human nature.

We have typified the pessimistic section of the population by a cynical town wag whose observations may be said to represent that particular feeling. These voluble doubters were commonly called old croakers, backbiters, "bellyachers." For anyone seeking for a comprehensive idea of the trends in opinions or talk spreading about on the Plains then, it will be necessary to reflect more fully the optimistic sentiment.

Wherever a magnifying optimist located there, the spot could be pointed out by him as the ideal community. His residence in the Desert caused him to look down upon the territory back behind him toward the Atlantic's shores. It would have been clear from his outgivings that the East was "run out," the choice folks moving

west, the degenerates remaining. The Sixth Principal Meridian, this precise center of the United States, identified the best section in the world. Who in his right senses would want to live anywhere else? It attracted not only the best men but the best women, horses, dogs. Climate, soil—"stem-winders[1]!"

You realized that after such an outburst the speaker might naturally find himself thirsty and retire to wash the dust down his throat while beginning to "figger" how he could pay thirty-six per cent on over-due money he owed on property safely standing in his wife's name. Or he might wander across to see how the "lazy bugger," whom he hired to do work that he should have done himself, got along. Or it might be train time when he could properly sidle over to the depot and angle for new "suckers" from the run-out ponds of the East, to whom something might be sold. Such an optimist could, indeed, harangue long and loud. His breed included the know-alls, expounding on every theme with a wealth of idle time suggestive of the Spanish saying that the night was made for sleep and the day for rest. More than self-satisfied! They applied contemptuous epithets equally to the Government, the State officials, the asses in the legislature.

Yet after the worst that truth could portray, what else than a certain approbation, a sympathy even tender, could the discriminator offer as to such pioneer figures,

[1] Stem-winding watches were then new; keys no longer had to be bothered with.

and a masculine esteem for their language? This border, frequently hostile like a skirmish field, could not have been conquered by hands in silk gloves, soft tongues, faint hearts shrinking from the rudeness, the alarms, of a wilderness.

Possessing, doubtless, more than any American author an intimate acquaintance with the largest range of American people from highest to lowest, Mark Twain affirmed that when finding he could believe half of what any gentleman said, he called him an honest man. John J. Ingalls, the brilliant United States Senator from Kansas in the 70's and 80's, was once asked how he managed to keep satisfied at recurring elections a well-known supporter evidently ambitious to supplant the other in Washington.

"By promises, sir."

"Well, but when the date comes to make them good, how do you get on with him, never giving him anything?"

"By bigger promises, sir. By that time he has forgotten the past. People on the Plains only look to the future."

Along this new frontier, occupied by a scant and scattered population whose lines of inter-communication had been poorly opened up, people not only kept vague assertions on the wing but welcomed their assurances. It was much easier to believe promises than undertake to check up their value. Many things led many persons irresponsibly to promising and agreeing. The breezy climate became, of course, blamed for the disposition in spellbind-

ers to "blow" about what they or the country would do for you. The betting habits increased the fondness for taking chances on crediting what was told or offered. And as part of such optimism in the air, promises provided their own excitements. Those of the original pioneers who liked to relate extravagant adventures found themselves added to in numbers in this section of the frontier by war folk with its own "yarns" of campaigns and battlefields, and notably by the Texans and "bad men" offering vaunting temperaments and fantastic deeds for recounting. Along with this big talk went easy-going pledges, words of honor.

Promises of the iridescent, unredeemed order, therefore, furnished a currency in the financial circulation. The undesirable gentry had early an inflated supply of this exchange. They distributed it freely. It didn't even cost paper to be printed on. It floated without expense on the air. It became suitably payable at no place nor date and its collection could with difficulty be enforced. Many people, being both deceived and undeceived, bought, sold and swapped largely by means of this popular medium, paying debts, liquefying assets, discharging moral obligations.

For a promise cheered low spirits, brightened the past, gilded the future. It didn't emphatically burden certain minds, trouble certain consciences, harass certain souls. It was definite to the extent at least of being defined. The truth was indefinite, being indefinable. The latter seemed stingy, stiff, exacting, and seldom to be relied on

in a bad scrape, while the former appeared an encouraging comrade, hail fellow well met, ever ready and useful in turning a hard corner. Promises figured as the aids of mankind, making life easier to get through with. You saw them lift men out of holes into which truth had chucked them. Unlike it they adapted themselves especially to exigencies born of poor memories. For a population looking ahead rather than behind, they served, in fact, as almost a *sine qua non.*

To typify individuals of this general ilk on the Plains we may avail ourselves of a frontier character in its cattle capital as an offset to the Lem Hankers of the pessimistic groups. This was an overgrown, lubberly young man of the inordinate optimist variety—reckless, farcical. He became employed sometimes to drive out and show land when an agent found himself too busy.

In such capacity, with injunctions not only to find the right section corners but to entertain his guests and "crack up" the country, this promising original, whom we will disguise by the name of Curly, developed genius and proved himself typically handy. He loved to guarantee the climate, the prosperity. To hear him "go on" one would have thought the dry West had water overflowing, no bad land, never a crop failure. He "promised" you it would all be a veritable garden. Many of the purported land buyers either possessed no money, or held to unrestrained ideas which no region on earth could exemplify, or were ignorant self-deluders, or wearisome curiosity-seekers with never an intention of

buying anything. Such persons, however, must often be shown land in the hospitable custom of the Desert, and it would fall to Curly's lot, as said, to "knock about" the prairies with them. He painted the future in such high colors of promises and agreements that he sold now and then a tract which his "boss" couldn't sell.

His rules for landing "earthworms," as eastern farmers might be called, ran something like the following. For pious "gents," "spiel" Bible "yarns" and quotations. For "fly-by-nights," lie like a candidate. It makes them feel "nateral." For folks who don't drink, "chaw" nor play poker, wipe your eyes "sorrer-like." For the Dutch, give them "Pennsylwanee." Tell them that people out here live fine on what hogs won't eat back East. For "widders" and old maids, inform them that there are four men to one woman on the Plains. "That nails 'em. They get stuck on the country at once."

Curly could keep up a running talk from morn till midnight, telling "windys" (as they were called) on that all-important subject: the shining resources and glories of the Desert and especially of its chief ruby—his county. The timid women among his buyers plied him with the more anxious or frightened questions. From the rear seat one of them might lean forward to be heard above the rattling of the vehicle, seeing a chance for a query when Curly stopped for breath.

"Ain't it purty dry out 'ere?"

"Dry? Oh, onct in a while it gits a little dry as everywheres. But that's all the better for 'em as don't drink.

Makes a good moral country. But the people ought to turn on the water loose. This 'ere Plains was onct a big lake. Only it got discouraged an' sunk down. But it's all here—jes' a few feet under ground. Bore down a well anywheres an' you come to the finest water in the world. Now, all the citizens has to do is to git together with their shovels an' go out on a side hill in the western part of the Plains where it's higher, dig a big hole an' let the water out. It will float all over the Plains, bein' connected up with Hudson Bay up north an' the Gulf of Mexico down south—an ocean of water, never failin'. When they git enough, shet off the tap for awhile. Simple as diggin' dirt. They'll do that some day an' then folks will stop yarnin' about the Plains bein' dry."

"But don't it git awful hot?"

"Yes, mom, it do het up a bit now an' then, but *one* thing—the 'mometer never gits high in the shade as it does in other countries. That's one advantage in havin' no shade. But the heat is allers *dry*. You can say that for it. Good for the health—tonics up the wimmin folks too. An' it makes folks live longer. They kinda dry up a bit like mummies. This dry air sucks the juice out of 'em. So they can keep on livin' an' livin'. But for anybody that wants to cool off, we can get up a sockdolager of a freezer."

"Do you have turrible floods?"

"No, mom, I promise you—no floods such as you have where you come from. Why, to show you how dry it is from floods! When they got the first fire apperatus down

to Topeky, the boys run her out on Kansas Avenue to show the taxpayers how much they was losin' for their money. As there wa'n't no fire jes' then, they squirted the stream from their hose into a prairie dog hole by the front door of the State capitol—folks wantin' to see the pressure. After a couple of hours the boys got tired squirtin', an' wheeled the outfit back to the fire house. An' the prairie dog come out an' run down to the Kaw River for a drink! No need to git rattly about floods in Kansas. An' even if we had floods, they would drain right off. That's the great thing about the Plains—she drains fine. There ain't a eighty acres that ain't got the Sahara desert licked to a plaster for drainin'. People comes from way back East jes' for to see our drainage. Most everybody an' everything can run away fast on the Plains, but the way water runs off can give 'em a handicap an' still beat 'em."

When Curly escorted only males on a long drive where probably the foot of white man had never trod, they, like the women, would finally get sore and tired, jolting over the tough clumps of prairie grass. He would take it easy under his little, round hat, tipped low over his eyes to ward off the fierce sunlight, and cocked up behind at a rakish angle. On to the middle of his back would he slide, spread his enormous feet over the dashboard, still auction off his enlightening volumes of knowledge in this sprawling posture while being jostled about and keeping an eye out for buffalo wallows and gopher holes. A man inquired one day,

"Any fish in that river?"

"Fish? *Alive* with 'em—great big cat fish, big as a man an' mighty good eatin' too. One of 'em—six feet long—caught a feller by the seat of his pants down to the dam at Lawrence an' he couldn't git shet of the blame' fish till he got nigh the Kansas City stockyards—forty mile."

"How can that be when the rivers and creeks out here are so small?"

"That's jes' *why*. The big fish takes up the slack in the streams."

Reports of the fearful windstorms in the Desert soon reached the East and resulted in much disquietude on the part of immigrants.

Curly again: "This Kansas atmosphere, of which the State is so full—you can say one thing for it, I promise you. Nobody has ever lost his return ticket or even his life in one of our zephyrs. It handles folks jes' as gentle-like as a lamb. Anyone of these inmates is safer from harm 'ere than in the usual padded cell, for this one is four hundred miles long by two hundred wide."

When a thick-headed Dutchman asked Curly about tornadoes, extended information was forthcoming.

"Ja wohl, we have a little scooter onct in a great while, but they never kill nobody as they do in Missoury an' Nebraska an' down in Texas. It seems like that when one of 'em cyclones in another State strikes the Kansas border they kinda bounce up in the air an' skip over till they come to the next State. It's only a little twister

'ere—moves people an' their chattels round a bit but don't hurt nobody or nuthin. You never lose by it. But I would 'adwise' you to ask my boss to insert a wind clause in your deed."

"A vind clause?"

"Ja wohl, he'll be glad to do it. That's the general custom. If you have a guaranteed wind clause in your deed, then you own the farm where you an' your fambly an' baggage has lit after the wind. For instance, a man comes home an' he finds his fambly an' buildings has moved. He hunts for 'em round the State till he finds where they have lit an' that farm is his'n under the wind clause. An' a perfect title too."

"But vot about de farmer vot owned dot farm?"

"Oh, you see, the wind has moved him too an' maybe he has lit on a better farm. People likes it. Easy way to swap. No expense or trouble. An' a good gamble. Any day a fambly may wake up on a farm twict as good as the one they went to sleep on, so they is more than satisfied. That's why there is almost no litergation about land titles. Nature passes titles on the Plains an' no railroad fares to pay in movin'. People, expectin' to sail up to Heaven, even sings in churches

> When I can read my title clear
> To mansions in the *skies*.

Why, there was a widder down in Greenwood county—what ain't got no green nor wood neither—an' still it pertends to lay our county in the *shade*—"

Just then a high knot of grass might have sent the occupants of Curly's four-seated rig in the air, with the horses starting to run. By the time the stampede became quieted, his story about the widow in Greenwood County would likely have been forgotten, particularly if a dark object came in sight on a distant hillside. A dugout where there might be well water for dusty throats! If the team headed for the place, an absorbing interest in this new prospect on the monotonous prairies might have seized the party.

Inconceivable as it may appear such palaver, such Münchhausen ingenuities, seemed to be accepted as true by Curly's usual customers. These were ignorant, often understanding English poorly. Some of them did not hear well, especially through the noise of the vehicle. Others had been told such fabulous accounts of the West that they believed anything, notably in and around the unduplicated Abilene with its meteoric Texas trade. Still others would sink back on their seats, contemplating in a hopeless befuddlement their driver. Talked to death, they resigned themselves as helplessly ready to buy anything.

Quite the opposite were two fashionable Wall street brokers who came out on their summer vacation to see Texas Street, and Wild Bill shoot somebody. They grew interested about picking up an honest dollar on the side and looked into speculative land offerings. It devolved upon Curly to drive the pair to a certain section. These New Yorkers represented the best Broad Street type,

being free with money, jovial, and democratic. They gazed upon Abilene as a kind of hippodrome saturnalia. They supplied Curly with twenty-five cent cigars and made merry over his clodhopper antics. What a buffoon on the stage could be made out of this Jayhawker! One of their questions on the trip,

"How deep is the soil out here?"

"Gentlemen—I promise you—it's so deep they don't know how deep it is. There was a woman that my boss sold a quarter section to down in township sixteen, range three, East of the Six P.X. She took a notion to see if he had lied to her about the deep soil. He never lied to nobody—yet. So she went to diggin' a big hole on her land to find out. Almos' any day you could see her out there pickin' away with a pickax, her sunbonnet looped down round her neck, her skirt blowin' in the wind—mighty good looking livestock specimen too, that woman. Well, would you believe it? She worked so hard she hurt both her arms bad an' they had to be sawed off above the elbows. An' still she hadn't struck the bottom of the soil. She wasn't no good then for farmin', so she sold out an' moved into town. There was a feller artist come direct from Paris to Abilene, an' when he seen this beauty with only half her arms, he thrown up his hands an' exclaimed, 'My God!'—she looked that nateral."

The brokers reeled with laughter and passed over another cigar. On meeting the lumbering Curly afterward on the streets, they said,

"Curly, those were pretty fair extravaganzas you blew

off to us the other day, but we want you to concoct a real bang-up Kansas lie—a top-notcher—that we can go back to Wall Street with and take the wind out of the sails of everybody."

These stylish speculators had speedily agreed with this rhythmical advice in their railroad guide book for tourists: "Don't think you are going west to find some fools; for a millionaire may be in buckskin and a college grad in rags." On leaving for New York they declared that the Plains seemed to be the Land of Promises even if it wasn't the Promised Land.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE GREAT GOD LUCK

The church in Abilene still served as the sole and community church. A mocker might have judged as significant this frame structure's lack of the substantialness and permanency of the adjacent stone school house, indicating how the population felt less sure of Hades than of the necessity of educating their young. A frequent comment: "Hell fire don't scare people awful much who have lived on the Plains in summer. In fact, they'd be sort of used to it in advance."

The capital, in this winter of 1870-1, claimed likely some eight hundred adult citizens, and perhaps fifty at most belonged to the church or actively affiliated themselves with it. This percentage may seem small, yet it indicated a pronounced unit, in the main energetically orthodox. A few of the aged residenters living along the creeks and river had felt for the first time "kinda skeery" about what might be waiting for them beyond the grave and "joined up." They wanted to hedge—place a bet on the pious side. The by-and-by might turn out sweet, as the hymn sang of, but what if it turned out a sizzler for them?

The Bible being the only book, we may say, that had

been read at all by pioneers on the Plains, it was, as might be expected, the only one referred to and quoted from. In one way or another the Scriptures did enter, if rather ineffectively, into the majority of those lives, being freely heard of also on the tongues of the profane. Liberal-minded persons who would have liked to attend services and hear a good sermon, and in addition believed it right thus to align themselves with the good part of the citizenry amid the struggles in the Desert, became, as noticed, unfortunately weaned away by the fulminating doctrines of the early bucolic preachers. These "consigned" on Sunday nearly all humanity, nearly all their neighbors, with whom the pastors stood on friendly terms during the six week days, to endless punishment down below, with the refrain: "where every prospect pleases and only man is vile." They had evidently at their disposal an everlasting brimstone lake of burning oil into which you would be dropped to boil forever.

Here where life was handled comparatively without gloves, the maledictions and thunders of orthodoxy came forth with frank zeal and zest. Jehovah—a furious Man, always enraged, and customarily chastising with the most horrible tortures! At the same time not a few persons remained deeply troubled by the reigning traditions of a personal Devil. He kept right after everybody, especially children, with a hot pitchfork. It appeared that Satan engaged in a monstrous state of warfare with Jehovah and on about even terms, the victims of the fray being mere worms—poor humanity. It echoed the historic

recitals of kings fighting one another in the persons of their luckless and helpless subjects.

> "God moves in a mysterious way,
> His wonders to perform"

was, on the other hand, intoned in the pulpits and singing congregations of the Plains as a favorite line glossing over the inexplainable whys and wherefores of unreconcilable things mundane. That good institutions and works should often be born and decay in acrimony merely suggested propositions deemed easily and sufficiently explained by the word "mysterious" as applied to a benign Deity.

So fear, not love, being here the chief aspect of religion, the good clergymen, who succeeded one another, served out abundant threats of excommunication. The main pious course laid down in the Desert looked so narrow and hazardous that few could be expected to keep to it. Sundays in and about church, instead of meaning a peaceful, hopeful and happy relaxation, a comfort instead of a threat, after the storm and stress of week days, proved far from welcome except to the few sure of being saved. Nevertheless the first church in Abilene, we must repeat, aided by its restraining influence the best results in the growing pains of that new country's development.

What of the other ninety and nine?

On the raw Plains the mission of religion, likewise raw, caused the ninety and nine or, say, ninety per cent of the people to feel that they did not deserve wholesale

condemnation in face of what they were going through. As shown, they thought they had a tough enough time without being treated angrily from pulpits. Consequently they failed to "join up." It seemed a pity that theology did not offer a solace, unalloyed good blessings and joyousness, to a folk sorely tried in every other way.

The American people and their civilization naturally took on pioneer traits since the United States exhibited a pioneer manifestation beginning from the first at the Atlantic seaboard. Their history illustrated that of a moving border—a border ever pushing west and now reaching the strange trans-Missouri territory. The Americans along their march inland had had to wrestle with the uncertain in climate, in the aborigines, in wild animal life. An advance fortified by rifle and shot gun! They needed also for their protection, for instance, to see far ahead and around, so they learned to like bright-colored objects. They needed to hear acutely, so they learned to prefer distinct sounds. They needed to be ready to shift location quickly to avoid being in one way or another trapped, so they learned to like to move on. Thus the Yankee race, it may be argued, acquired traits of fondness for flashing colors, loud noises and being "on the go." One identified such traits, at least, in the early immigration of the Plains.[1]

In the Desert the demonstrative habit of wagering

[1] Lead colors were used there for economy, not from choice, because, as noted, they held their own better and longer in that climate, showing less its wearing effects.

must have struck an observer as not only rather surprising but significant in this miscellaneous population. Through this habit he might come to acknowledge the existence of a new kind of worship. Odd as it first appeared, though these border people were surrounded by perils and risked their all in mortal play against the doubtful Future, the typical majority, as indicated, did not particularly heed Jehovah. And they snapped their fingers at the idea of the Devil, so generally received then as a figure in the white man's civilization as to be conventionalized. This majority had been around the country "right smart" and while running across many amazing objects, never ran across Satan. Hence he did not exist for them. Nor for analogous reasons did Jehovah intimately exist for them.

Yet civilized nations need the conception of Jehovah and even the redskin clings to that of the Great Spirit. What could one find that these frontier Americans worshipped in lieu thereof but the god of—Luck! This was an abstract notion—not personified like Jehovah and the Devil. It did not even rear its head as a beast like the mythical dragons that flourished so terribly over the imaginations and consciences of many early races.

Luck differed entirely from the idea of Fate. Fate seemed somber and adverse while Luck could be good as well as bad. The latter represented an inviting, personal opportunity compared with Fate which affected one as predestined to be antagonistic and an agency of condemnation, doom, death. While Luck could be bad, it became

especially regarded as apt to be good or favorable, the word itself apparently coming from or being associated with the German *Glück* (with the G left off), meaning happiness, good fortune. Had there been any mysticism in the population on the Plains, apart from the religious manifestations evinced among the small minority, it might well have attached itself somehow to this god.

Luck was capricious, exciting and, therefore, the best thing to gamble about. Mysterious, unseen, indifferently controlled or actuated by mortal laws or motives, it seemed of the stuff out of which humans often shape their deities.

Luck showed itself to many Plainsmen as governing the propitiousness of the weather, the outcome of crops, the safety of journeys, the friendly fortunes of business undertakings. Was not the language of the homestead, the store, the home circle, the newspapers, crammed with expressions of luckiness or unluckiness? Lucky dog, lucky day, unlucky turn of events, luck is fickle, luck rules the roast! These and a score of other examples, from a people whose vocabulary was limited to practically five hundred words, denoted the zealous recognition of the god Luck. A woman would be lucky if her dress was made to fit. Her child would be lucky if he got to school on time. A man would be lucky if he didn't lose his money in a transaction. If true that there is no more accurate reflection of a community than that found in its language, this pioneer tongue rightly evidenced how greatly the idea of Luck penetrated frontier brains.

Men and women trusted in Luck, loved it, feared it, cursed it. They bet on it, not on Jehovah or the Devil.

What made Luck popular on this lonely advancing trans-Missouri border was its "chumminess." It lent itself and suited itself directly to the informal daily intercourse, the fun and seriousness of mortals, without any accompanying discommoding anxieties about disrespect or sacrilegiousness. The betting customs, being in harmony with this cult, included appropriately card playing. A deck of cards on a table or plank displayed on the Plains the altar of this deity, and card games constituted its rites. A pack of cards is stacked full of uncertainties. It is like an image and content of doubtful life itself. Can the god hidden among the aces and deuces be other than Luck? A natural result was the card playing of the pioneers in the lack, besides, of other convenient amusements. How pat the ceremonial of poker fitted into the widespread betting habits in the cult of Luck!

Reasons for it may occur to mind. As the American population pushed west from the Atlantic, on beyond the Mississippi or Missouri, and became more detached from its European origins, traditions and legacies, the more did it feel the need of adopting Luck as its own particular deity—one presiding over its present and future. For there were on the many moving, distant western frontiers scarcely any churches to instill faith, reverence. People married, women bore and raised children, parents died, nearly always without benefit of clergy. The far-west pioneers usually got buried in an off-hand manner and

conveniently near the spot where they breathed their last. Their shallow graves soon disappeared under the obliterating changes of the earth's naked surface. Nothing seemed to the survivors to remain but Luck—their own god Luck.

No characteristic frontiersman believed that an intelligent God condescended to act in such matters as whether your horse stepped in a gopher hole and broke his leg, whether you stumbled on a rattlesnake, whether a summer starting with a good rainfall ended in an injurious dry time. Not God, but Luck. This frontiersman thought then that his god merely changed into "plaguey" Ill-Luck. Yet he *did* believe he might be lucky in guessing or betting how Luck would act.

As to other peculiarities of this conception which those pioneer men and women dealt with as their distinguishing divinity, there could be noted perhaps three particular divergencies from the conception of Jehovah. Luck is blind, like Love. "Blind Luck"—the common expression! It plays no favorites, at least for long, since it sees not whom it blesses nor curses. It strikes down good as well as bad. It favors the wicked as it favors the just. It hobnobs with criminals as with Samaritans.

Then again, Luck has no Bible nor pious ritual from which its nature and rules can be determined as guides. It heeds no appeal, no prayer, no sacrifices. Exhibiting no sense of judgment nor justice, it respects neither sackcloth nor ashes. It acts like lightnings in the sky, their

zig-zagging strokes so hopelessly outside of man's foresight or control.

Also Luck is constantly present and visibly on the alert. While history appears to confess to long periods and fateful events where the presence of a beneficent Jehovah cannot be discerned, where evil prevailed and no superhuman hand stayed its course, where worthy civilizations sank under blows into the humility of sand heaps, Luck may be said to have been at work, for or against. There is in many an enterprise, in many a human affair, an irreducible minimum that cannot be figured out of the way. Therein, as the customary language on our Great Plains attested, lies Luck concealed. It is inextinguishable, it cannot be avoided, it cannot be ignored.

So not only did men find this Desert a "gamble," life there a "gamble" like games of cards, but they found their deity a "gamble," all pretty much of a piece. Our hoof and horn wiseacre, Lem Hanker, could hit off this general attitude of the ninety and nine on the fitful Plains.

"I tell you how I have got it sized up about this 'ere Luck an' Jehovah an' Devil business. I can prove to any sensible man in a minute there ain't no Jehovah an' no Devil active so far as us mortals is concerned. The proof is layin' as plain as pie all round every galoot, but most of 'em can't see further than their navels. You take an' write some letters an' address the envelopes. You leave 'em layin' on your plank jes' as you've thrown 'em con-

venient. Then when you git round to it, you pick up a letter an' an envelope fer it. I bet you or anybody fifty dollars you are jes' as apt, before you git through, to git hold of the wrong envelope as the right one. You have to be mighty keerful you don't mail the wrong combination of 'em.

"Now, *I* say, how can a feller figger any Jehovah or Devil in that little transaction? You can't nor me neither. It's an even break. But something *does* step in to mess round, temporary at least. And *I* call it Luck. Everybody does. That's *her*. For she's tarnally at it. Nuthin too small or cussed fer Luck not to mix herself up into. If there was Jehovah in our picayune human affairs, we would allers pick up the right envelope for a letter. If there was only the Devil runnin' things as many fellers seems to claim, we would allers git the wrong envelope first. But Luck plays an even hand—take it from first to last. She may quit you fer awhile, but she'll come back strong—if you live long enough. There's one thing sure about her: you can bet on her changin'. She'll allers ride under your colors sooner or later.

"An' she ain't all the time an' infernally nosin' into your private affairs—your character an' reputation—snoopin' round. That's why she's such a favorite on this 'ere frontier where many folks wants to keep kinda shady about 'em kind of things. I notice most people only git very religious anyway when they git hard up. As soon as they git flush again—shoo fly!—they forgit about it. But you'll find 'em fer Luck first, last an' all the time.

The Devil? Huh, there ain't no sech thing. That's a bogy to scare women an' chillern an' keep weak-kneed fellers walkin' straight. Out 'ere in this forsaken Paradise the only Devil I see with horns an' hoofs is the Texas steer. An' as fer the hell fire circus, people ruther take their risk on Luck any time."

It was, at any rate, evident that Luck meant what such early neighbors had in mind. Would a wound heal, would a horse drown in the river, would a woman's Monday washing dry well, would a stray bullet kill a man going innocently about his business, would diamonds win at cards to-night? For the ninety and nine, or ninety per cent of the population, Luck decided—the great god Luck—and its pendant consort—the goddess Chance.

CHAPTER XIX

EARLY WOMEN SETTLERS ON THE PLAINS

An able Kansas Governor in the 1870's, George T. Anthony, announced in a campaign speech: "Kansas is a good place for men and dogs, but it's hell on women and horses."

The sensitive plant on the Plains represented loveliness.[1] I loved it and the song of the meadow lark more than anything. The plant was small and so modest that it shrank from your approach, its leaves closing. The blossom blushed in a soft dense pink, the perfume so sweet as to drown the senses for an instant as if with the delectableness of a paradise. How different from all that scene and existence!

A noteworthy part of the first population, as remarked, included single or otherwise unattached women, especially noticeable in the country. On their land claims they tried, without training or the necessary physical capacity, to make farming go where the male had no or little faith in it. They comprised sensitive, delicate women, unexpectedly to be found out there, battling on the

[1] Either *Chamaecrista* (or *Cassia*) *nictitans* or *fasciculata*. It was not, of course, the distinguished *Mimosa pudica* of the tropics, now being introduced in Florida and perhaps other southern States.

frontier. I have not forgotten a man's saying in those days:

"Men has got wimmin—'em as has to make their livin' in the world alone an' no trainin'—so corraled that there ain't only about two occupations fer 'em: Prostitution or runnin' a boardin' house. Danged if a feller can tell which on the hull is wust."

Any endeavor, in a general way as in this chapter, to set forth amid facts the character and surroundings of those early women can well end by saying that they appeared nearly always stanch, unblubbering. They suffered in silence not only from the unavoidable rudeness of circumstances but from the avoidable rudeness and selfish oversights of the other sex, persuaded to be pachydermatous about life.

We have frequently in previous paragraphs spoken of women as sharing in the major crude and harsh realities. We may look here at some of the minor trials which they underwent.

The breeze, in that country which the Indian termed windy, was very trying to them. While it tended to make men dreary, it made their mates nervous, on edge, in that droughty, rather highstrung climate. They often said they could endure anything if the wind would only stop.

Housekeepers, sharing in the favorite notion of moving away, left things more or less scattered around. When a woman came on the Plains with strict habits of cleanliness, neatness, she grew often disposed, discouraged by

the perverse whims of the climate, to let herself down into a state of half-caring. The gritty dust seeped in, blew in, filling men's beards and women's hair. Even the sides of buildings seldom looked as if warding off the spiteful courses of the soil. If you rubbed off a table top, you no sooner turned around than a new layer of sediment seemed to occupy the spot. Of what use to wash windows when they would be just as dusty the next day? Women accustomed to this operation at least once a fortnight in the East contented themselves here by washing the panes twice a year. The occasional dust storms were so severe that the inhabitants turned their backs to them in the streets to prevent their faces being stung.

Then the hard water. Eastern people had, as a rule, used soft waters. The western specimen proved refractory. New to the world, such a problem did not yet engage the attention of chemists. The soaps and other devices for taming wild waters either did not affect the local kind or even perhaps caused it to be worse. One could not clean thoroughly. The water hardened, roughened, the skin and left cloth and clothing stiff, scratchy. To wash appeared like rubbing a board between hands.

The usual house woman commenced to keep her family partly supplied with soft water by catching it in tubs and basins under eaves. This worked unsatisfactorily. The nimble winds upset such articles, likely strewed them half-way across a block. Or the rain spilled most of the quantity captured. The clothes she had in the procedure would probably become wet, bedraggled. The

cost figured more than the gain. Besides, the attempt looked too pitifully like the poverty it really exposed. Cisterns began after awhile to be heard of.

The flies. The desert species proved to be intrepid, voracious, and swarmed freely. No sooner did a house look as if completed than a cloud of flies enveloped it, apparently coming out of nowhere. As people did not know of screens, there could be found scarcely a fixed way of keeping flies from dining tables and from awakening sleepers at such early hours that they remained fretful all day.

And the insect which science dignifies by the name of *Cimex lectularius*. It infested that border, a persistent, evidently unconquerable, infliction because its rapid multiplication was supposed to be favored by the cottonwood tree. While this pest worried women, the toughened pioneer men usually could sleep in peace on a blanket alive with bedbugs.

In strolling past an humble village home in the Desert in the usual desolate circumstances and suroundings, you might hear the frail voice of its mistress as she sat on her cracker box couch, strumming a guitar poorly, her notes quavering over

> Come, birdie, come, and live with me,
> You shall be happy, light and free.

Piteous, such a meager pattern of companionship suggested, vaguely yearned for, yet removed from actualities! Birdie, in nearly all instances, acted sensible. It

didn't come to live where it would have been anything but free. In looking back at this good woman's premises one might see her rooster picketed and far from happy, light-hearted. Picketing any live thing was the habit in the almost fenceless towns, on the almost fenceless Plains.

Making love on that unceremonious frontier became looked upon much as exploding pyrotechnics. Passion, real passion, among this ambulatory people couldn't wait long before being touched off into a legal display.

Yet, in a contrariety familiar in almost all human customs, marriage here as elsewhere represented then a firm institution. Divorces, hardly heard of, were regarded as very doubtful, almost disreputable. And not only the rigid wedded state but the openness of this primeval country and of its manner of life checked by taut reins excursions and incursions of passion bent on sundering marriage ties, breaking up homes. The sunny climate, the dry, easily traveled roads, the unfenced streets and cow paths, invited to the out-doors anywhere. Homes and offices being small, scattered and of a poor sort, men stayed in them day-times as little as practicable. The outgoings and incomings of everybody everywhere went on pitilessly plain to view, encouraging neighbors to watch one another. How keen a pastime in a region bereft of uncriticizable pastimes! To ignore this and its accompaniment of tittle-tattling was to ask too much of any race. Irregularities of the social type became, thus, curbed also by the naked visibleness of all intercourse.

In the case of the Bull's Head saloon we observe how the population, as blushingly mid-Victorian, could quickly warm up over womanly morals. Exaggerated garments as the mode for women made this clear. The female physique seemed considered a thing of evil, as if designed to pollute the heart and wreck the soul. The immense ballooning skirts, so often with trains, compelling the wearer to shake a cloud of dust out of them after a short walk, concealed the diabolical ankles. To hide further the skin, there were, as we have mentioned, formidable bustles, together with flounces, tucks and pleats, prominent with profusions of rosettes, jets, beads and other adornments. The female body, a fortress clothed! In the fear of immoral lure, fashionable women in that day looked invested yet deformed in a completed caricature of overdress, as shown by Godey's Lady's Book and Magazine. While *bon ton* was far from being followed by the indigent and humble fair sex on the Plains, they reflected it distantly by being as cumbrously garbed as possible to avoid any exemplifications or temptations of lust.

Thus a mark beyond praise must be placed to their highest credit. Not only should they be called inflexibly virtuous but the men so little tolerated other conditions in their cases that no uneasiness on such a score could be discovered.[1] We see how even the outlaw Texans any-

[1] This needs to be emphasized. For Emerson Hough in his "North of 36" presented a scene (pp. 390-1) in which pioneer women on the Plains were apparently ready, at the first occasion, for the lowest debauchery. It offered a groundless insult to that womanhood.

where, under any circumstances, entertained no thoughts of disturbing good women.

The fact that the weaker sex had to be left so much alone stressed the practical need of sexual honor among males on this border. In that rambling state of things where men were habitually away, wives guarded the homes or needed to travel often with masculine strangers. Custom in the free hospitality on those prairies required a wife to harbor a wayfaring man. Her husband on his travels was at liberty to be harbored by another solitary woman. As he didn't wish his wife frightened, much less attacked, in his absence, he respected the feelings and rights of the other husband and his hostess. A gentleman's agreement, too desirable to demand formulation!

Designing men recognized in women the easiest victims in land and other business transactions. Ignorant of secular habits, the latter relied on their traditional safeguard of intuition as to the other sex and often suffered grievously. Many early males on the Plains strongly inclined to look after their own advantages, conveniences and distractions, thinking little of what their feminine counterparts would find convenient or enjoy. One excuse for the former should not be forgotten: namely, the status of women was then honorably held in the world to be quite secondary to man's. Humanity had scarcely ceased to hold to the ancient beliefs that the gentler sex possessed indifferent or embryonic brains and souls. Women seemed rather regarded as the negligible half

of humankind—as tools for the continuance of races and the maintenance of men's homes. Their rôle, to reassert, remained relatively the rôle of subjects. While their many virtues became thus constrained, through good or heedless intentions, to be negative, women displayed qualities in the Desert hardly possible to the virile, aggressive males.

Though the rough social, domestic and personal arrangements stood forth so unfavorably to the felicity of womanhood, its legal and educational position and protection were, on the Plains, of an advanced and exalted order as shown by statute books. These revealed a striking and most admirable contrast to the usual belief that the female part of the human race existed merely for the benefit of the male.

The habit he prescribed for the first wives in the Desert was to save, to scrimp, deny themselves any gratifications of civilization. They saw their complexions go, their hair become dry and hard in that climate, their shoulders early bent over hollow chests—all their physical attractions suffer. While the members of the stern sex admitted, as always, they didn't understand the other sex, they assumed to dictate what appeared best for spouses. Men frowned on the independent public expression of women's minds, on any individual way they had of looking at life, and combated such manifestations. Husbands ordinarily sold their homes, their businesses, prepared to emigrate, without consulting their help-

meets, and claimed every customary aid in getting their legal consent.

Herein an outstanding demonstration of it all as a man's scheme of living where woman entered as a self-denying, domestic slave and over-looked mother! It was held to be her duty, furthermore, to "keep her mouth shet" about this as about almost everything else. Her reward? Inconsequentially supposed on Sunday to be in a heaven in which, however, such males usually took little stock.

About the beginning of the twentieth century a large gathering assembled in the Mississippi Valley apropos of some progressive movement. There resulted a glorification of the whole valley and of the men who had made it all it was. A gallant member, at the closing meeting, obtained recognition from the Chair.

"Gentlemen of the Convention, I rise to observe that this exceptional body, of which I am proud to be a part, is about to adjourn while forgetting our better halves. I grieve to note that not a word of impassioned oratory, not one word of soaring poetry, has flung its wingéd flight in tribute to the ladies. We men have only celebrated ourselves. Hence I propose a tribute to the noble women of our transcendent Basin—the fairest of their sex—our mothers, wives, sisters, daughters and even our divorcées—who have valiantly stood by our triumphant alluvial empire in its upbuilding—in its trials and magnificent victories—who have starved and 'fit' and endured by our sides—who have never weakened in

faith about our granary of the world—and who have made it possible for us men to accumulate and prosper because we had our women in whose names we could put and keep our property!"

This sally was significant. Those frontier men in the 60's and 70's accumulated, but the wives as a rule hung on to family possessions. Many husbands of those early times, who boasted about themselves and about what they owned, seemed in no wise abashed by the fact that their property commonly remained in their wives' names to avoid seizure for debt or to enable their own financial responsibility to escape the effect of mishaps. The women largely held the homes and children together. They saved patrimonies so often by clinging to them in the face of anger or trickery. Especially could this disposition be ascribed to "old maids" whose period of unmarried misfortune dated from the age of thirty in that epoch.

As far as concerned the backbone of existence those earliest women in that American Desert had nearly always, in short, the requisite pith and gristle of the pioneer. They lived in dread of Indians and wild animals, contrived homes in prairie "schooners" and dugouts, jumped from rattlesnakes, slept out in storms, managed to survive without doctors, medicines, nurses, being thought of all the while as coming west for the comfort of man.

This inveterate lack of appreciation is reflected in accounts left by those frontier males. Woman is slightly

referred to therein. Compliments, tributes—so few. It was as if she had "tagged" along.

In the prairie grass cemeteries of the former Desert are unmarked, sunken graves where lie, under sensitive plants perhaps, the first Marys, Marthas, Joans, mute martyrs and long forgotten.

CHAPTER XX

TEXAN ABILENE IN ITS GLORY

Spring, the flawless season. The prairies then reached out as pretty as a picture, their green dress brilliantly colored by endless mirages of wild flowers. The skies glowed in tenderness, softly variegated, the strenuous winds hushing as if by lullabies. Nature smiled sweetly. Its breath was honied as a child's. How good to be on the Plains then—to be anywhere on that great, great Level! And the vernal season lingered long before the furnaces of summer became fanned by southwest currents from the incandescent *llano estacado* (Staked Plain) and the Panhandle, to be followed by the fall months dead and hueless in the lack of forests, trees, leaves, with their prismatic regalias. A land for spring, not autumn, poets!

Those have never seen that Great American Desert as God made and left it can hardly conceive of its broad nobility and revelations. When settlers began entering upon that vast plain, what liberty, what untarnished zest for living, it seemed to afford to body and soul! To mount of a morning your horse, well saddled and bridled, and breathe in the salutary air while free to strike off where white men had never been, unhindered

by any obstacles and laws of civilization, was to know the aboriginal joy of being a man.

It appears at first curious that the few early writers who roved across the Plains took small account of the natural beauty enveloping them. Yet the love of scenery and of describing it are characteristic of a different kind of men and women. The former peoples dwelling century after century on the shores of the paradisaic Italian lakes and amid the wonders of the Swiss Alps paid no heed to the resplendence all about. To extol this was the lot of latter-day enthusiasts who discovered such founts of happiness.

This turned out in a way true about our trans-Missouri territory. To unprepared quills, there apparently presided here only a unity in a universe of land and a unity in a universe of sky. Authors who launched themselves on these unviolated prairies consequently looked off, away and up, drawn on by the mystery of the area extending beyond, on higher lands under a lower firmament. They were affected by the infinitude of what stretched about them so simply yet so fraught with magnetic though awe-inspiring suspense. They scarce found a thrill, for instance, in the variations of clouds which swung down as if to caress or destroy them.

But along the famed and commanding Chisholm Trail, winding leisurely and majestically across this flattened, wondrous world, Death between white men lurked or stalked. Imagine a superb cavalier, his locks jostling over his shoulders, jogging along on his mustang, bound

northward on the Trail on a serene, on a breezeless, day. His big, soft slouch hat increases the effect of his unusual size. Now appears before him a mild, saucer-like depression about three miles from rim to rim. No sign of human handiwork, save the Trail, blemishes the locality. The smooth, calico-hued table-land rolls away here in its neatest effect. Its patterns lie starred with flowers. The liquid calls of meadow larks make music. Prairie dogs bark like chirps. A flock of prairie chickens whirr away in their low, slow, direct and stupid flight, too easy marks to tempt a skilled huntsman. A bunch of antelope loiters, ready to bound off gracefully over a slope. Before the gazer the lightness and brightness of the vistas animate, buoy up.

From the opposite direction, imagine another horseman hastening hither. The two riders begin their descent into this saucer of land. The new man—a solitary cavalier on the lope! Our first rider watches the approaching figure and adjusts his pistol belt. One never knew what might happen in that Open. Friend or foe? As the second horseman draws near, he falls into a trot, and the other slows to a walk. The newcomer now reaches the bottom of the depression where buffalos had shallowly pawed out the dirt by the side of the Trail. He checks his horse, stands stock still. He raises his hand as a sign of wanting a parley. It was in token of peace. Our first rider halts in turn.

Snatching advantage of the other's unpreparedness, the stranger hastily grasps his revolver and fires. The

shot nearly grazes the horse of our friend. A second shot immediately! This catches his large hat brim, thrown up for a better view. Before the third missile can "zit," his bridle drops on the mane of his animal unmoved by shooting affrays from the saddle. Both weapons out! Two simultaneous, unerring bullets! The second horseman rolls off into the wallow, his riderless steed racing away.

Our friend resumes his journey as if nothing had happened. He glances at the body as he goes by. "Both counted. Dead as a buffalo chip!"—he remarks to himself. That was all it meant to him. He spurs his mount into a dog trot. Slowly he ascends the other slope. He is on its top. He takes the distant descent. There lingers the last glimpse of him, his untrimmed ringlets dancing in the summer sunlight as he sinks from sight at his ease. Imperturbably he left behind the body of his enemy. He played fair as a generous man toward an antagonist who tried to "jump" him. The two bullets embedded in the dead body would show to everybody that an ambi-dexterous terror of the Plains lately passed by there. A warning!

Soon after our wayfarer trots on, another feature of the panorama may be conceived of. The early rhapsodists on that American Desert had, as noted, been impressed by the immense expanses. Peering ahead and upward they mentioned these virgin prairies as a refreshing, wholesome topic of acclaim. They spoke of life

and hope with fervor. They turned away if they could from the subjects of despair and death.

Yet these original prairies offered another and noisome, direful picture. This was to be observed by looking down, not up; around at one's feet instead of in the distance. Frequently could be seen ugly signs of struggle and of extinction of life. There lay scattered around you the scoured bones of curving carcasses—the white ribs of the Plains. Dark, horrid spots dotted the landscapes. Here might stand a group of rank or dead weeds where a steer had fallen at his last breath. Over there, a mile or two away, two buffalo bulls apparently fought it out for good, a hideous skeleton remaining to tell the tale. Close by, perhaps, a horse partly eaten! The vestiges of small circles in the dirt like circus rings could be occasionally identified. At such points white men defended themselves from Indians or "bummers." Farther away might lie a shallow mound under which had been lowered the form of a frontiersman, a blown-down stick now at his head. Not surprising if wild animals dug out the grave and devoured the body, leaving the clothes sunken in! Odors of decaying flesh often swayed in the winds, driving away the sweet smells of sensitive plants and other blossoms, and sickening the nostrils.

Thus these maiden prairies looked carpeted over with the designs of mortal conflict, of dissolution. It was one vast, open, desecrated cemetery—a charnel house. But

of this the early poets and prose writers little complained. They ignored the horrors surrounding them. They beheld the Desert rather as a mother of blessings, possessing kindness really in her heart.

So when activity ceased and quiet reigned again in our imaginary hollow where death had just come anew, figure to yourself a coyote venturing from over a hill's rim, picking his way after squatting awhile in dread of hostile developments. Then he proceeds down to the little hole where the warrior lies. On the neighboring hogback behold a gray wolf, attracted by the scent of men and horses. Still more warily does he advance. A pair of turkey buzzards inhabiting a forlorn tree on the nearby creek may wheel upward and commence circling low down around the fatal wallow. All look for new ribs to be cleaned to staring whiteness—for more carrion here where many a ghoulish animal of hair and feather can fight off one another or patiently wait turns.

Will friend arrive in time to hold the last sad rites over his "pard," surrendering his frame decently into the hiding bosom of Mother Earth? Or will gnawed bones be left to bleach vilely as those of a mortal who had passed to the Judgment Throne untended by human hands? In either case you may seem to know of one more white man's corpse flanking the long and deadly Chisholm Trail.

Surrounding Abilene in this spring of 1871 the Texas herds of longhorns arrayed the landscape to an extent not yet seen. They crowded upon one another as if in

enormous Venetian canvases dazzling the eye in a gallery large yet too small. One by one would the herds be moved to the revolting chutes of the stockyards. Imperial cattle Abilene with its Lone Star legions! How impressive that forceful show of wealth, power, glory!

But a wretched fang still hung in the side of the capital. If we glanced east from its western edge, there lined up at our right the little stone schoolhouse, the little church and, farther on, the "hell's hole" of women. In the near distance along the railway lay the small depot, the big Drovers' Cottage, next the extensive stockyards with long lines of cattle cars being loaded. Beyond, a dense, white haze draped the iron track as usual on hot days. The scintillating, tremulous curtain shut off the gaze toward the next station.

This represented the day scene. Yet in the sparkle of the air one thought of the more dangerous nights. At twilight, from any vacant, low-crowned hilltop overlooking Abilene and its narrow valley, its river and limestone bluffs, one could marvel at Texas Street, afire with lights, commencing to buzz with its evening alarms. You might catch strains of "Do you love me, Mollie, darling?" or "Sweet Belle Mahone." From the southern sky before you a planet might shine down like a huge diamond. The Lone Star!—hanging above a soiled ribbon strung along up and down over the earth's surface: the Chisholm Trail, streaming away to the Southland and lined with dead bodies of man and beast!

"Bossing" the larger Cattle Trade this year were more

and wealthier drovers with augmented hauteur and braggadocio; more, if possible wilder, cowboys evidently bent decidedly on ruling or ruining the town now that no Marshal Smith governed. Texas Street exhibited this situation as the fang piercing direct into the ribs if not at the vitals of Abilene. For, both mercurial drovers and cowpunchers were "powerful" exasperated by the many landowners plowing and sometimes fencing wide patches of the prairies. Rumors of many fracases between drover and homesteader reached the capital and added to its perturbations over some kind of an on-coming war. The Texans, for reasons given, had an overweening contempt for the poor farmers. Diggers rimed with "niggers," and what could be said of Kansans in general who thought a "nigger" as good as a white man?

It was like a great cattle boom in the metropolis. The stockyards could not seem to be enlarged sufficiently to accommodate the valuable and rapid shipments. The railroad siding had been extended down the prairie. The long sections of cattle cars, waiting turns, daily blocked up the town, since the railroad now cut through its center. This annoyed the citizens and disturbed their women and children necessarily crossing back and forth.

Drovers' Cottage, the White House of the Texas Cattle Trade, was altogether overrun with princely guests, its import overshadowing. Texas Street, as Hell Street, took on its largest, most substantial proportions. Its pageantry presented to view broader, more flaring colors despite the rule of disarmament. The increased number

of buildings included some of a permanent character, and the merchants and other dealers there assumed a more ostentatious attitude as if regarding themselves fixtures entitled to special and commanding rights and privileges.

Texas Street zig-zagged eastward with its many drinking places. The names glared forth mainly as Texan or bovine: Alamo, Lone Star, Bull's Head, Longhorn, The Trail, Old Fruit. The most notable example was the Alamo which approached splendor. Its array of three double glass front doors always stood widely flung apart in the middle of the north and south section of the thoroughfare. The resort connected with stores on either side. Its ornate, domineering bar with its brass mountings and colorful bottles of liquors was reflected in imposing mirrors. Paintings, in remote but lascivious imitation of Titian, Tintoretto or Veronese, exhibiting nude women relaxed in beauty prostrate, seduced the Alamo's sporting life. The green gaming tables occupied the spacious quarters facing the bar, and gambling continued, as ever, open and above board, day and night, while glasses clinked, spurs jingled, quirts cracked. A cowboy who had lost all his money there said Wild Bill told him that the only way to beat monte was to let it alone. This saloon had what doubtless could not be seen anywhere else in America in such a place: an orchestra which performed forenoons, afternoons and nights.

The sensation that Abilene created in the nation brought many rich men, notabilities, curiosity-seekers,

to the spot, besides notorious gamblers from the Mississippi region and bad Plainsmen from the south and southwest. Millionaires looked here into prospects for adding to their already swollen assets by deals in the cheap lands. Some of them acquired solid square miles of acres. Amateurs of savage risks or rites, anxious to see life spiced up hot to tickle jaded palates, were to be spied. Sleek, well-dressed Wall Street brokers could behold here an entertainment making gilded Broadway nights represent but an emaciated distraction.

Staff correspondents from important eastern dailies arrived, and sent back long accounts losing no virility in language. Nothing like this "rip-roaring," sanguinary town as an institution had been seen in the United States, in Europe, in the world, in any century. It was the one paramount place to observe men nonchalantly, in a time of peace, regard death as a joke and face it hourly with drinks in hand. All too vividly eccentric, too high-tensioned, to be true? It had to be verified by the eye.

Wild Bill now soon developed here into a lethal drawing card. Individuals hastened from the Atlantic seaboard to watch him ambi-dexterously shoot down a man. The noted guerrillas of Italy and Spain, Captain Kidd, Daniel Boone, Davy Crockett, Kit Carson—they remained only figures of the printed page. But Wild Bill and other heroes of Texas Street *lived*. They could likely be seen in the very acts of their æsthetic murdering.

Connoisseurs of the diabolic flocking to Abilene felt, it seemed, eminently gratified. Its weekly program, bombastic, spectacular and artistic, illustrated a gaudy panjandrum as if staged for observers at a price. The bandit apparel of the steer-whacking, "hell-raising" Texans, their fancy ponies and saddles, their smoking pistols (if and when apparent), their blades gleaming like carnivorous teeth seeking to be buried in bloody flesh, their theatrical liveliness, all formed part of a show wherein Spanish magnifico, Mexican señor and Indian got transformed into the Lone Star firebrand. A lurid, demoniac magnificence even suggesting at moments that of the arena of combat and slaughter in the Colosseum before the degenerate Emperors of Rome!

Among the visitors seeking both speculative opportunities and diversion as at a new mining camp, there came, of course, leading livestock buyers, beef commission men, emissaries from large packing houses, watching the chances for immediate or future solid business. What did this traffic mean, carried on like a homicidal circus? Might there be a substantial, permanent bottom to it or was it a temporary craze or orgy? Did it point directly to the right angle in the development of the vast, trans-Missouri territory? Could prosperous affairs be enlarged in that Desert? Was little Abilene, indeed, to be the cattle depot for the whole country, the world? What the trumps? Who should fail to be on hand to find aces to slip up their sleeves?

Mayor Henry, after serving eighteen months, declined to run for election in that spring of 1871, and Joseph G. McCoy, who had been king of the Texas Cattle Trade, was chosen mayor.

James Butler Hickok (Wild Bill), successor of Tom Smith as marshal of Abilene in 1871. Photograph taken in Junction City, Kansas, in 1869.

CHAPTER XXI

WILD BILL, MARSHAL OF ABILENE

At last had entered into this equine and accoutered carnival a man who is now held to be significantly typical of the old frontier life or certainly the most popular among its characters. That old Wild West stands for Wild Bill in the public mind and he stands for that Wild West. While many other such pioneer names remain somewhat in the background or have dimmed, his name is flaming forth, and the literature about him is lighting up into what promise to become American sagas of pristine fighting and drinking. He is often confused with his friend Buffalo Bill. But Cody shot only fleeing buffalo and this is hardly of the material for sagas.

In 1871 the portentous figure Wild Bill Hickok took up quarters for the first time in Abilene. His reported long record of fatal shots at white men or of knives sunk into their hearts, whether he acted as Union scout in the Civil War, frontier guide, duelist, marshal or gambler, caused the citizens to give him a wide berth. The redoubtable Wild Bill Hickok!—before whom men quaked in their boots on that whole broad border between river and mountains!

Wild Bill was believed in Abilene to have killed more

white men in civil life than any other character on any American frontier. The stories of his heroic and expert combativeness already made embattled myths of the ancients fade into childishness. A sufficient number of his adventures seem authenticated to hazard justifying his personal status as one of the most consummate of killers of white men in any age.

Two-pistol men (meaning ability to shoot straight with either hand or both hands at once) were even then comparatively rare and he figured as the recognized superior among them. People claimed that he possessed the unexampled gift of taking a strange weapon and hitting the bull's eye. He ranked as exceptional, too, in being, like Tom Smith, ready to fight and supremely adept in fighting two or more adversaries.

Also Wild Bill killed only white men trained to fire and who nearly equalled him in courage. He didn't shoot down "poor trash." He confined himself to first-class antagonists. The code in typical duels on the Plains differed from civilized codes. The keynote there: get the "drop" on an enemy. But accurate firing was taken for granted. Original adroitness could usually be seen in "laying" for the first shot. Second-rate men, having this object, employed all kinds of maneuvers. In Hickok's salient case favorite stratagems met familiar and successful reactions. New stratagems became foiled.

Wild Bill's headquarters were in the palatial Alamo saloon, only a block from our house. He gambled there as one visible means of support. The town

trustees appointed him marshal since there came forward no one else who might be equal to the job or who, at any rate, showed a skilled fearlessness. James Butler Hickok (Wild Bill), born in Illinois of a religious family and now thirty-four years old, was officially our marshal from April 15, 1871 until December 13—eight months. The choice did not prove very satisfactory to the citizens, still mourning the death of Tom Smith. Grave misgivings did they feel, for Bill consorted entirely with criminals or the lawless. Cheek by jowl with the Texans and "bad men," he lived outside the civic life. The Abilene civilians regarded him as a desperado and argued whether he or Texas Jack surpassed as a "bad man," efficient in shooting white men. Why could or would Hickok establish respectable peace while encouraging the very difficulties he should surmount?

Smith's effective *régime* of disarmament the summer before, his almost perfect control, made Bill's line of duties far easier than his predecessor's. Smith, about four years younger, paved a smooth way or showed that the back of wild Texan domination could at any time be broken. He did thorough work and single-handed. The Lone Star forces, including Mexicans, Spaniards and Negroes whom they brought with them, had grown accustomed not to "tote" weapons.

Wild Bill needed merely to continue Smith's achieved program, which he did in the main or after a fashion. He prevented murders and destruction of property through the dread of his twin pistols, and for this he

deserved and received credit, especially since the Cattle Trade was larger. To control Abilene to this degree meant the chief thing, and in so doing he only shot two men, one a fellow officer and friend, for which accident he felt very sorry. The affair did not come off until October, 1871.

Hickok carried out ostensibly the ordinance against "totin' " firearms. But since his interest and time were divided by gambling, he did not remain strict about the ordinance, and witnessed with no great dissatisfaction the growing habit of men with pistols at hand when they wanted to shoot, as will be seen in the account of the above-mentioned affray. Residents became gradually used again to pistol "totin'," though left with trepidations all summer instead of the confidence Smith had brought them.

Wild Bill, contrary to the latter's custom, did not patrol Texas Street either on horseback or afoot. He stayed in the Alamo at his games and employed one or more assistants to watch proceedings. This also was evidenced in the fatality referred to. The proprietor of the theater, almost next door to the Alamo, felt so uncertain of Bill's handling the town efficiently that he went to the expense of employing an officer for his own place. If wanted, Bill had to be looked up in the saloon. He was not a trained police official and not, in Abilene, a physical fighter like Tom. He did not fancy taking a culprit or offender on his shoulders to the calaboose for the Justice of Peace to deal with. He acted only too

ready to shoot down, to kill outright, instead of avoiding assassination when possible as the higher duty of a marshal. Such a policy of taking over justice into his own hands exemplified, of course, but a form of lawlessness. Conceptions of courts, the right of trial by jury with safety meanwhile for the accused, appeared in Abilene to lie beyond his experience or conscience. Cast in a different mold from that of a model officer, he did not see why as marshal he should not sit in public poker games in a saloon when there were no outbreaks. So Texas Street simmered or more or less boiled in a kind of truce.

Besides, Wild Bill's personal feuds had nothing to do with the town. Men followed him there to try to slay him in revenge for themselves or for a "pard." He was obliged always to be on guard against these private enemies as well as Texans, and kept his back to a wall whether gambling or not. Unwilling to understand the full nature of his official calling, and shunning civilian influences for criminal, he seemed heedless of the hushed yet troubled state of feelings in his employers, though thankful were they that he kept the top of the town from blowing off.

I remember Will Bill very well. I could peek in at him when I ran the daily errands for our family to the stores connecting with the Alamo or to the store opposite. On the way to and from school I found it convenient to pass by his saloon. Occasionally, lost in wonderment, I followed him. But he hardly walked except from one resort to another, and rode scarcely at all in Abilene.

The accompanying photograph, taken in Junction City, Kansas, in 1869, well presents him as specially arrayed for photography. He was about six feet, of sightly proportions, gracious in bearing, graceful in movement. His flowing gestures invited attention, setting off a man striking in any environment. His figure as well as his gently symmetrical face could be called handsome. The brown hair, a conspicuous feature. It dangled down around his shoulders and had an inclination to curliness. Unexpectedly he parted it, like a woman, in the middle, a fashion then deemed effeminate or "sissy" among males. His piercing eyes looked light blue to some and light gray to others, depending on the light. The fine nose was aquiline, and he displayed a mustache, the necessary attraction then in men. The chin impressed one as firm, yet agreeably rounded. His hands and feet looked small and delicately molded. He "sported" top boots of thinnest kid, and their very high heels tilted him when he walked. He "toed in." He dressed expensively, showily. His white shirts, showing afar where such linen seldom appeared, would balloon out around his belted hips in summer as they supported his elegant six-shooters.

Wild Bill's manners seemed soft, his voice mild, his whole attitude, quiet and amiable. Unlike what might be expected in a desperado, he did not quarrel as a habit. He was not a boaster, a braggart, being essentially modest. Not only his accuracy with six-shooters but his being constantly on the alert, his quickness of a cat, his cool-

ness under fire, formed already a part of common knowledge on the Plains.

Hickok became at once the wild man bogy of Abilene. Mothers made their children behave by naming him. The school had two fighting gangs of boys ranging from eleven to eighteen in years. One was known as bad, the other as good, in emulation of the factions trying for mastery in the town. I happened to be the youngest and smallest of the good crowd. Each side bragged of a leader and a second in command. Each member met an antagonist of his own age. Mine, fortunately for me, acted as if mild. The two groups roamed about at odd times and when they met, a fight ensued. We combated on the creek and river banks, in wild plum patches, in the cemetery, or elsewhere out of range of the marshal's pistols. But once we collided on the west end of Texas Street. When the scramble of eighteen boys—always nine on a side—got well under way, someone shouted: "Wild Bill's coming!" We beat a hasty retreat. We "skedaddled." It proved to be a false alarm, yet it luckily broke up that contest.

And so it was. Wild Bill had a taming effect. The werewolf!

In his *régime* the uproariousness of the baudy women forced itself on public attention and could no longer be dodged. The proximity of lupanars to the school would seem unbelievable. Such publicity and turmoil developed into a rank offense in the nostrils of the citizens whose

children, in June and September, were virtually next door. As the Cattle Trade increased, this, indeed, grew intolerable. The climax came when a drunken cowboy went one day on the warpath on this half-indicated street. He disported himself to a refrain echoed by McCoy, but cinched with profanity. The process of squelching this individual made the trustees and marshal realize something must be done. But to attack the problem of the women would seem almost surely to result in a new danger.

A bold scheme at length evolved. There was picked out for their district a patch of ground on the southeast, about a quarter mile from the center of the village and outside its legal limits. Fenced off there, the occupants should be forced to stay inside unless on respectable errands like shopping. The plan would remove them from the town itself, including Texas Street, and breed less inclination to dissipation and rioting there. In this women's quarter shooting and stabbing and all-night life could be indulged in in full blast. Anybody going out there would know in advance that he took his life in his own hands, without having an appeal to the town's authoritative protection or retaliation.

Such came to be the stand taken though the Lone Star roughs acted especially sensitive about these women as about their own horses. No matter what the response of those men, this proposition was to unite the civic leaders in backing it up to the last ditch.

The feminine colony found itself moved to the new

ground in a business-like way—and no Texans interfered. They accepted the change unexpectedly in good part, appreciating the advantages. In that detached district, away from the school and marshal, they would have more freedom night and day; and anyone wishing to avoid an infuriated female on his trail through the labyrinth of Texas Street saw in such a separation of distance a defense. It meant also more liberty for the women. So another turning point in the history of the original Texas Cattle Trade on the Plains was smoothly rounded off.

From J. B. Edwards in the *Abilene Chronicle* in 1896.[1]

> He (Wild Bill) sought for and obtained the position of chief of police. He was known in those days all through the border states. . . . He stood over six feet high, straight as a man could be formed, (we have never seen a better formed person), quick as a flash, the best shot with a pistol on the frontier. His hair long, hanging down to his shoulders, taste in dress, his complexion fair as any woman's, such was the man chosen (in 1871) to keep peace in our midst.
>
> Unfortunately, though, his very notoriety seemed to cause many men to be jealous of him. By nature he was somewhat over-bearing when from any cause he became cross at anyone. Consequently he was more or less annoyed by jealous-natured, hard characters. He was very careful in his movements not to let such men get the start of him,

[1] Edwards was arrested by Wild Bill in Abilene for firing a revolver and paid a fine of ten dollars. This incident led Bill to become quite confidential with Edwards. When the former left in that fall of 1871 he gave Edwards his photograph from which the one published here is taken.

not daring to drink to excess, yet drinking some every day. . . .

Hickok was offered a large salary to go on the stage and even made an effort to follow that profession, but only for a short time. He said it was against his nature to appear before the public on the stage. He drifted around Kansas City during 1872 most of the time and nipped a raid of the James Boys and their gang who undertook to rob the gate receipts at the Fair held there in '72, the gang actually making the attempt. They were met by Wild Bill, a pistol in each hand, in such a way as to cause them to make themselves scarce instanter.

He, however, could not keep away from the border, and when Deadwood was booming its first boom in the Black Hills in '73 or '74, he drifted there and while sitting at a gambling table was shot in cold blood by one Jack McCall, thus verifying what he had often claimed, that he would die with his boots on when he did go.

W. M. Brewer, who lived in Abilene then and claimed a personal acquaintance with Wild Bill, wrote in *Adventure*, Nov. 10, 1924:

Bill Hickok was not such a bad man as lots of people imagined, so far as my knowledge goes. True, he was a professional gambler, but so were many men of that day. He never sought a quarrel, but never backed down from a fight and was so quick on the draw and shoot that any ordinary man could have his six-shooter drawn before Bill reached for his and then Bill's shot would be fired first. In other words, he was so proficient in handling a six-shooter that he had the advantage of about ten seconds on any of the gunmen on the plains, and it must be remembered that in those days the old cap and ball pistol was the weapon in use, as there were no metallic cartridges used until about 1872, and possibly it was later than that.

As to Wild Bill's one shooting scrape in Abilene, Edwards sent me this rather circumstantial account. It gives an idea of such encounters.

> On October 5th, 1871, Wild Bill killed one Phil Coe. A number of men who were about ready to return to Texas got on a hilarious spree, but none of them was drunk unless it was Coe. It was late in the day, just as it began to get dark. They compelled a number of citizens who were found on the streets to stand treats.[1] All seemed to be in a jolly mood. They carried several on their shoulders into saloons. These were asked to set up the drinks. Wild Bill also treated but he told the Texans they must keep within bounds of order. They finally came to the Alamo with its three wide double glass doors open. No weapons appeared in sight, but suddenly a shot was fired from out in the middle of the street. Bill sprang to a door of the Alamo, drawing a revolver in each hand. Coe spoke and said he had fired at a dog. Bill knew at once that it meant trouble and saw Coe had his pistol in his hand. Each raised his pistol toward the other. Immediately two shots rang out, one from each man. Coe's shot went wild of its mark, but Bill's struck Coe in the bowels. Coe's shot passed close to Bill's head and struck the back wall of the Alamo. Coe fell to the ground in great agony, Mike Williams, special policeman employed by the Novelty Theater, hearing the shots, started on a run with his pistol in his hand. He came from the west and turned the corner by the Alamo, no light shining at the corner. Bill saw a man with arms coming but could not see who it was. Bill shot Mike who fell dead in his tracks on the sidewalk. Coe lived two or three days, then died. Coe was a gambler by profession and a bully by nature. He had been in the Confederate army and shared feelings of hatred

[1] An exceptional performance in Abilene at any time, showing the loose conditions under Wild Bill. In Smith's day nothing like this would have happened.

against Wild Bill who had been a Union scout, sectional animosities between North and South having not had time to cool. The trouble between Bill and Coe had started when the former took occasion to reprimand Coe as to a charge of cheating in his gambling with some men who had complained to Bill. The Abilene citizens were of the opinion that the whole fracas was from the beginning intended to dispose of Bill, but it failed. Bill greatly lamented the killing of Williams since they were the best of friends. Up to this time, and during all that summer, Bill with his deputy maintained fair order in face of the fact that there were more desperate characters in Abilene than any other town. They came from Kansas City, St. Louis, Chicago, New Orleans and other parts of the South as well as from the mountain country on the west.

At once, after this affair, Wild Bill procured a shot gun. He cut off the barrels, down to twelve inches in length, and loaded it nearly to the muzzle with heavy shot. He then carried it as well as his pistols while in Abilene, never leaving it out of his reach day or night. Shortly after Coe's death word came from Texas that Coe's mother offered ten thousand dollars as a reward to anybody who would kill Wild Bill and as evidence bring her his head. Bill claimed that a trio of men did come to Abilene after him and followed him to Topeka on the train. When Bill got off the train there, the trio was also about to leave the cars. He raised his gun and ordered them back on the train, and it carried them away.

About the time Wild Bill left Abilene that fall (1871), he was offered a large salary to go on the stage and give exhibitions of shooting with his pistols. He finally entertained the offer. But when asked to perform a practice shot with blank cartridges and told he would have to use blank shots in his act, he balked. Though he did travel a short time with a vaudeville troupe, he soon quit, saying that such a life had no fascination for him. He spent most of the time living in Kansas City after leaving Abilene, but

when the Deadwood gold discovery was heralded abroad he went there in 1875. He left there for Denver that next winter, but returned to Deadwood early the following summer and was shot in the back there by Jack McCall.

He was as fine a specimen of a man physically as I ever saw. He was fully six feet in his stockings, weighing one hundred and seventy-five pounds if not more. His easy and graceful ways harmonized with his quickness—like a flash of lightning. No man was a better horseman. He would drink liquor, but never to excess. He loved excitement. When he was about to leave Abilene late that fall, he gave me his photograph. We were alone on the sidewalk. I said to him, "Bill, now that you have got on your feet financially, why not quit the hazardous life you are leading, settle down, go into some business?" "Oh," he replied, "I couldn't do that. I could sell goods, I think; but it would be no use in my trying to confine myself to such work. I would not last a week." He fully knew his disposition, and that he would finally go with his boots on, as he often said.

Wild Bill received from Abilene as marshal a monthly pay of one hundred and fifty dollars and one-half of all fines collected. His share must have equalled his salary.[1] The two men he shot in Abilene in the Coe duel were all he killed there as marshal. Bill had his faults, but his record all through, living as he lived on the border of civilization from early manhood until his death, was a uniquely eventful one.

Such was J. B. Edwards's statement. Apropos of this Coe case, cheating over the green seemed the lowest thing a man, calling himself a man, could do in the Desert. Honor at cards required to be maintained.

[1] Smith received two hundred and twenty-five dollars a month and half the fines collected, as mentioned.

Poker must be protected. This constituted a prime test of white "fellers." That the violators of rules—"four-flushers"—should be shot fitted the creed of a section of the population in its apparent belief that shooting a man was less a crime than shooting a horse.

From the foregoing pages the inevitable comparison may be made between Tom Smith and Wild Bill as marshals of Abilene—the one almost unknown, the other with a renown still growing; the one revered there, the other looked upon there as practically an outlaw; the one uniquely successful, the other partly so as an officer of peace. Smith's headquarters were in the mayor's office, Wild Bill's in a saloon. The one appeared readily accessible to civilians, the other unfavorably so. Smith ruled the town by a constructive, intelligent plan; Bill brought to light no plan save dependence on his faithful six-shooters. He ruled by his pistols alone. With Smith, pistols became the last resort in his training and instincts for saving lives but conquering them. He, unlike Bill, gave his whole time and his thought to his duties without assistants. Both figured as fair and square fighters, giving their opponents some chance for their lives. This placed them in the manly, noble category as differing from the prevalent sneak-shooter type. Smith, unlike Bill, was a disciplined chief of police and led a strictly legal and moral life in Abilene as judged by any code. And, finally, while Wild Bill had one exploit in the Coe affair, Smith had numerous exploits such as

those in the Big Hank and Wyoming Frank cases, not to speak of the oil lamp feat.

From Edwards again, in the *Kansas City Star*, November 15, 1925.

> He (Wild Bill) had notches, probably thirty-five on those (his) guns. . . . Smith (was) the most efficient officer of the frontier. . . . Wild Bill did not use his bare hands as his luckless predecessor had done; he used his "hardware" instead. His bravery has been described by old-timers in Abilene as cruder than Tom Smith's. Many believed that Wild Bill without his guns would have been tame.

Mayor Henry said:

> The life and character of Tom Smith typify the virtue near-at-hand. He instinctively trusted that. It is doubtful, in the presence of danger, if his thought turned to his weapons. Indeed, I never saw them while he was on duty. Wild Bill, his successor, on the contrary never forgot that he was armed and could shoot first. The latter's bearing and bravery were of a far lower type.

In Frank J. Wilstach's interesting book entitled "Wild Bill Hickok" there are only about five pages (and unsupported by evidence) concerning him in Abilene, excepting the accounts of his encounters with Coe and John Wesley Hardin, the latter affair coming to nothing tragic. Wild Bill's career in Hays City was longer and is made to occupy more space in Wilstach's history, yet that town ranked as very much less important and celebrated than Abilene.

This author, a theatrical manager, born in Indiana in 1865, appears not to have sojourned in Kansas nor witnessed any of Hickok's activities. Wilstach's second-hand description of the Coe murder does not agree with Edwards's given here on a preceding page. But the latter was a mature man, a daily acquaintance of Wild Bill in Abilene, and he collected much material about Hickok. The Wilstach book is the result of considerable research and entitled to due credit. It is an almost unqualified, almost wholesale, glorification of its hero, supporting the idea that he was not a "bad man," not a desperado, not a professional gambler; on the contrary, "in his time and environment, this country's greatest peace officer (p. 16)". We do not wish to attempt to dim the true luster of Wild Bill's notoriety, yet in Abilene and in the judgment of its civilians at the time the above, as we have needed to show, can hardly be called correct. His constant life in the bosom of Abilene's criminal population as one of its steady gamblers must disprove the Wilstach thesis as relating to that period of Hickok's life. In the rôle of city marshal he stood there much below the standard of Tom Smith both in personal observance as to morals and in enforcement of ordinances in letter and spirit.

In the *New York Times*, September 13, 1925, this author wrote:

> Hickok wandered over the West for some years and finally became Marshal of Abilene, Kan., a town then overrun with a lawless element and known as "the toughest

place in the world." Marshal Hickok shot his way into popular confidence, and in doing so found it necessary to plant about a dozen men in the renowned Boot-Hill cemetery, including the fastest and most dangerous gunman of the Texas Trail, Phil Coe. Having pacified Abilene, which, it was said, "he kept like a church," he joined General George Custer as a scout.

This is mostly in contradiction of Edwards and myself and partly so of Wilstach's own book. It is a sample of the erroneous historic stuff, like Hough's "North of 36," insistently published about Abilene and its Texas Cattle Trade. Hickok shot only two men in Abilene, one a friend by mistake. The popular confidence in him as marshal was decidedly not absolute because of his mode of life and his disordered conception of his duties. The Boot Hill cemetery lay in Dodge City, Kansas, coming into existence several years later. It was the Chisholm, not Texas, Trail in Abilene days. Hickok kept the town anything but "like a church," though assassinations and wanton destruction of property had been practically put a stop to there in 1870 by Marshal Tom Smith. Vice reigned openly and rampant in 1871, and Marshal Wild Bill lived congenially in the midst of it, sharing in it to the extent he pleased. Wilstach says in his book: ". . . when he (Hickok) assumed the marshalship of any heretofore lawless town he ran it like a church." He killed his two men in Abilene toward the end of his career there, not at the beginning.

In Buffalo Bill's "True Tales of the Plains" (p. 52): "In Abilene, Kan., when he (Wild Bill) was marshal . . .

he restored law and order in a personal fight, killing four men." This, as seen, is an error.

The article on Hickok by E. C. Little in *Everybody's Magazine* for June, 1901, written as a thriller with no psychology, is untrustworthy as to facts.

In Abilene Wild Bill, as indicated, exercised a spell, a fascinating awe, somewhat like that of a splendid but deadly serpent. He offered two contradictions. Without this conflict in his make-up, however, he would not doubtless have been what he was. The strange, more or less terrorizing, aura enveloping him affected one as outside human attributes, as if it claimed something of a forbidding supernaturalness.

In singular contrast to all we have said concerning his distinguishing title to celebrity as pistoleer, there seemed, odd to remark, his hermaphroditism. He suggested a southern type, though of a New England strain. In looks and bearing he appeared *feminine*. He conducted himself as if courting this confusing, epicene pattern. Like his origin and manner of dueling, his looks surprised one. That softly rounded contour, that rather angelic countenance, were quite the opposite of the thin, raw-boned Texan model. As his chest and hips measured large, he had, with his narrowly belted waist weighted by its brace of pistols, rather a female figure.

And, increasing his remarkable feminine pulchritude or resemblance to a Greek hermaphrodite, there should be noted, of course, his long hair around the shoulders of his white shirt. Long hair ear marked frontier men

since the earliest day of the trappers. They had no conveniences for properly cutting locks. In fact, these constituted a protection from the weather and added warmth to the body in a life where overcoats provided a small feature.

The second contradiction: Wild Bill in his saloon life in Abilene acted as a gentleman, a refined gentleman in a saloon way, whose word was good, whose honor was not sullied by a cheap nor cowardly deed so far as then known. But this gentleman changed instantly into a devil in a fight. It seems safe to say that no known white-man-killing hero on the Plains possessed his smooth picturesqueness, easy emblazonment, while displaying neatness and dispatch. Deft precision as a marksman and a certain charm withal graced him with an enchantment which may be set down as unexcelled if not unrivaled in the artistry of slaying white men. One was tempted to assign him to the mythologies and arts as a demi-god, lending himself fearfully while not traditionally to such inspirations and ideals.

CHAPTER XXII

CIVILIAN ABILENE ONCE MORE

The citizens, numbering now likely twelve hundred adults, began to think their financial heads surely above water. Or as Lem Hanker might have expressed it in local parlance: "Fer the fust experience of the kind, our hardscrabble residenters can feel two or more coins clinkin' when they stick their paws in their jeans instead of only grippin' a silent plug of tobaccer as hithertofore."

The town boasted of a banking office and a newspaper. And a fact in striking relief: the first pioneer to make a "fortune" there, some forty or fifty thousand dollars, spent now several thousand in acquiring a library. On the Plains there was not yet nor for some time, I believe, a public library worthy of the name.

Those early settlers would not have been truly American had they not, under present circumstances, thought of more active and smoother social doings of one kind and another. Newcomers with higher ideas of amusements supplied a desired factor. A jolty effort toward the cultivation of companionable aptitudes was, as pointed out, first induced by the town school. And, as also seen, the church gave a somewhat confused contribution to this

impulsion. But what with the often rough surfaces of pioneer dispositions, the knottiness of etiquette, the curse of dry weather or poor farming, and the intimidation of the Texans hanging over all, the matter of polite intercourse in the Abilene capital did not make its first pronounced headway until the assurance of prosperity promised to be more steady.

So at present, yet gradually, men and women were observed bowing smilingly like old acquaintances to one another on the streets. Those who never noticed one melted suddenly into intimate signs of friendliness. A general sociability proceeded on a firmer footing. About this time the Masons and Odd Fellows formed lodges in the Desert. Men who had long beaten the well-worn paths "cross-lots" between their homes and places of business, looking hardly to right or left but down before their feet in their worriments about money coming in to meet bills, saw themselves dignified on secret evenings by small white aprons, mimic trowels or other equipment, and engaged in solemn contemplations on the somber destiny of man. For a while were they then lifted sublimely above the sordid materialisms of the pocket-book.

On public occasions these impressive groups, resembling foreign ambassadors in array, would suddenly flaunt like invading strangers. By peering closely one was taken unawares by recognizing a carpenter, a blacksmith, a farmer, hitherto known as rudely garbed acquaintances wearing two garments in summer, now gorgeously translated into a high realm, with grand

titles like those of European despots. Bill, Jim or Joe had succumbed to men's instincts to club together, become social friends, in a sentiment of union.

There existed no halls for dancing on the Plains, yet small formal card parties could at times be heard of in homes, and men then consented to dress up some. Cards were abjured by the orthodox people, and many others hestitated lest aces and deuces damn. Religious uncertainties of the sort encouraged a social offishness in part of the very mixed communities.

Young men, however, felt so well that they often played pranks on the guileless from the effete East. There was Mr. Reginald Quibbs, as we may well call him. A young gentleman of some parts, he became promptly estimated as a mixture of greenness and softness. From what he had learned, this frontier stood out as a region of marvels. He looked for anything to exist or happen there. The practical jesters and spinners of disheveled "yarns" took him in charge. There came the hair-blown excitement of his pouring a barrel of water down a prairie dog hole at breezy eve and solitarily holding a gunny sack over it all night in the expectation that the half-drowned dog would run up into it and be captured for shipment back to eastern relatives who would be astonished at nothing from the prodigious West. The dog might, according to common report, be rods away.

And then the narrow-gauged mules!—additional specimens of the wondrous wild life in the Desert.

Jokers dilated before Quibbs on this local breed of fauna, and the latter beseeched a new friend to invite him on one of the latter's official rides into the country where some of these mules, unknown to the commonplace East, might be perceived. This official took the unsophisticated attorney along one day when they rode over the tufts of grass, the newcomer being shaken up and down until his sides ached. But ever was he on the alert to catch a glimpse of the new curiosity in natural history. When Quibbs confessed to an approaching exhaustion, his attention became directed to a leaping object in the near distance.

"There goes one now."

"What?"

"Narrow-gauged mule."

"Where? I don't see him."

"Yes, you do, consarn it. See the white bunch of tail?" Quibbs pressed his binocular to his eyes.

"That little thing?"

"The same. Country's full of 'em."

"We call them jackrabbits back East."

"But this 'ere is a land of kickers an' these fellers have an almighty *kick* in their hind legs!" Thus Quibbs informed himself on the Plains as to its famous narrow-gauged mules, of which he had heard so much.

The "tousled" reports toward the Atlantic concerning the Desert, the fantastic stories soaring about it, encouraged similar kinds of fun. A landseeker in Iowa wrote to a land agent proclaiming his weighty intention

of settling west of the Missouri. Yet his requirements needed to be satisfied before arriving so that he would not be disappointed and lose time. He wanted the best land. It must be fenced, have a clear stream and fine woods. The house must contain an ample number of rooms with hot and cold water in them. Barns and other outbuildings to be large and substantial. The homestead must be in easy distance from town. And more to the same effect. But he would not be willing to pay more than five dollars an acre. The agent telegraphed him to come at once. His farm awaited him at only three dollars an acre, and he would be met at the depot by a brass band. Nothing further was heard from the Iowan.

By this time the latest songs from distant Broadway, New York, began to circulate in the Desert. You could hear in those years

O, it's Captain Jinks of the horse marines,

and

Those tassels on her boots,
It is a style that suits,
They make her gay,
She can't say nay,
Those tassels on her boots.

Or

Aftaw the operaw is over,
O, aftaw the operaw is done,
Us gents of the very first wataw
Treat the ladies to oodles of fun.

We had this:

> O, a starry night for a ramble
> In the flowery dell,
> Through the bush and the bramble,
> A *kiss*, yet never tell.

In a country without bushes, brambles or flowery dells, such verse owned merely a reminiscent setting. But this suggestive cadence would cause women and girls to turn away and softly giggle. For kisses in those mid-Victorian days were, of course, only squeamishly mentioned like bosoms and ankles. Such things did exist, no doubt, like the celebrated legs of the Queen of Spain, yet people acted shamefacedly as if they didn't. On moonlight nights on railroad bridges fellows with their girls (called yearlings) could sit on the ties and gaze down in rapture on the muddy creeks. This was a pleasure, though a tie seemed as hard as a nail. They could dangle their "lower limbs" above the streams and listen to the loamy gurgles while imagining flowery dells all around.

Then the popular

> Life is like a mighty river
> Flowing on from day to day,
> Men are vessels launched upon it,
> Sometimes wrecked and cast away.
>
> But lift your heart and look up skyward,
> On Life's burdens all should beam,
> Help a worn and weary brother
> Pulling hard against the stream.

This sentiment struck home. What else were people doing on the Plains but pulling hard against the Desert winds? Where and how would the struggle end? Would there ever be a safe shore or other refuge?

An "elegant gent" in a "plug" hat, majestic frock coat and with a fancy vehicle and spotted team might drive into town, taking his position at a leading corner. He would have tricks to perform, jokes to get off. He would announce a flattering appraisal of the superior quality of intelligence he happily perceived on the countenances of those gaping before him. By far the most sapient west of the Missouri! Then out would come his patent medicine or patent gimcrack. He would supply a poor kind of festivity for two or three days—then away to the next gullible community.

Citizens on the Plains did not tolerate "plug" hats as a permanent feature. The first one in Abilene, worn by an innocent arrival intending to "locate," was shot off his head in Texas Street. Yet mustaches, as observed, appeared to be the glory of the male sex. Men and women in that epoch prized prominent ones as essential and distinguishing. In olden times long hair and long beards, either alone or united in the same person, apparently formed objects of worship as evidences of dignity and wisdom. The Jupiters and Moseses, the kings and seers, evidently affected such adornments all the more since these were neither trimmed nor washed. Hygiene did not trouble the ancients. Visible dirt and unsuspected germs on the human skin and hair remained

pretty much intact and sacred, particularly on persons esteemed holy.

After centuries, long hair on men and big long beards became shorn in the main while mustaches continued as a vital, significant mark of the transcendent male. Their character indexed the characters of the possessors and, by this masculine dash and witchery, captivated women. Before the luxuriant upper lip of man, woman was expected to fall in unhedging adoration. Not only did a mustache's knightly swing betoken chivalrousness but, following the Spanish proverb, its titillations admittedly increased the sensations of the embrace. People said that the deputy sheriff in Abilene had to turn sidewise on entering a door so as not to crumple his longhorn model. To marry almost for an attractive specimen proved not exceptional. Even the most serious men were mindful of such emphasis, while the heathen cowpuncher seemed "dog-gone" particular how his display got "set" when he first came in contact with a barber shop on the Plains.

The mustache cup became a new fashion. A careful man could not fancy his large and tenderly nurtured mustache spoiled in appearance by permitting it to be dipped indiscriminately into a fluid at meals. The way he tucked in and sucked the remote ends after imbibing coffee looked often quite deliberately languorous. "Tony" men considered barber shops for shaves and plenty of hair oil aristocratic necessities. When barbers arrived in a town, someone would be the first to have in a shop a beautiful shaving cup with the letters of his excessively

ornamented name burnt in large across the center. This was rightly taken to be the height of *bon ton* by other townsmen and, when able to afford the luxury, they had cups bearing their names, and felt important about it. For the barbers ranged conspicuously these utilities in a case so that they could be seen from the street, and men regarded them as signs of punctilio. In fact the cups advertised business success while tending to bolster up credit since they meant that the possessors deemed themselves fixtures in the county, bound to stay there for whatever end.

So, altogether, social matters advanced at a marked gait though the leading families, now more numerous, more influential, still practiced considerable reserve. They secluded themselves too much to need to be reflected in these pages as a very visible part of the convivial and public life except as their men stood forth as active and enterprising in business. But such welfare as was enjoyed lent itself to kindly attitudes, and these naturally would be impulsively exhibited at intervals before neighbors.

There had, naturally, to be wrestled with and overcome what is inevitable in all new towns. The scuffling for footholds, the reaching out for the real money afloat, the strifes between sections of communities over locations of civic utilities, the political squabbles in city and county, all gave opportunities for open or silent antagonisms that passed with time. Some persons yet thought that one should live by wits instead of by char-

acter out on this "jumping off" place of the universe. While everybody was publicly expected to look out hospitably for the largest number, the largest number seemed by some held to be Number One.

A general topic of worriment, or troublous dispute, continued to be religion. In lieu of being treated profoundly or abstrusely, people inclined to decide the subject in an off-hand way: "Do you play cards? If so, your god is Luck. If not, you are for hell fire." Fault began to be found in Abilene with the Baptist church, now that many sects arrived and missed their accustomed services. Members of other faiths did not relish hearing so much about John the Baptist. Before men who liked to take a drink now and then, this Evangelist suggested too much water. Nor did such sires of the future Kansas Prohibitionists favor the plan of a cold plunge and mud bath in the river. If they were to have a real bath, they wanted it hot. Thus became created in such citizens a lukewarmness, and it needed only things specific to furnish them plausible excuses for not attending church.

It appeared simple not to like church music. To chord or not to chord meant a difficult or discouraging matter among the untrained voices. If women couldn't sing as they wished to, the pleasurable emotions of religion were keenly lost to them and many of them presently found as much housekeeping to do on Sundays as any other day and no longer went to meeting.

A particular reason for them to stay away could not be gainsaid. The Abilene clergyman, zealous in his duty,

had no wife to tell him of Monday as the wash day. House affairs should not then be disturbed. Though the second day of the week represented his weekly holiday for pastoral calls, it was the busiest, hardest day for mistresses doing their own work. To have him come in before a woman in her worst clothes, now wet through, her cheeks red from the kitchen fire, her person covered with soap suds, and expect her to leave her tub, go into the front room and calmly visit an hour preparatory to being asked to kneel in placid prayer, as was the orthodox custom, made her ready to swear in his face.

So other religious organizations formed on the Plains and broke away from the parent churches to satisfy the requirements of all such dissenting people likewise rigid in their several faiths.

Questions about sexual morality and the harsh subservience of womanhood abruptly brought up in Abilene another topic of heated discussions. An awful thing happened. A woman of good repute left her unsatisfactory husband, took her two daughters from the north side of the railroad track, and joined the ranks of Saleratus Sals on the south side. Texas Street life with plenty of money and leisure to celebrate happiness as against a threadbare, hard-working respectability! Prostitution instead of running a boarding-house!

The town was shocked, not beyond words but into a burst of them. Arguments about morality and immorality hummed. Men and women, who had held back their ideas as if from a sense of compression, gave vent to

them, the custom of divorce, with its solution, being, of course, little known. The violent sacrifice of that woman, in excusing many women to loosen their tongues about their sex holding on to the poorer end of the bargain on that frontier, made an impression on a few husbands. They began to admit that their wives had been through a great deal. Fair play should give them a little more latitude. Some men commenced to fix up their homes somewhat from womanly standpoints. The color of paint, the desirability of a bay window, a good cellar with real steps leading down—such points became occasionally conversed about in family circles instead of being decided always by heads of houses. Husbands here and there acquired habits of working evenings around their yards by the side of their spouses and children. Feminine whims which males couldn't comprehend were at times gratified. Apparently nothing less than the shameful yet deliberate example above mentioned could have brought in a measure the whole domestic subject of women home to these pioneers.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE EPOCHAL EVENT

About this first of July, 1871, *the secret five acres of winter wheat on the river bottom turned out well.*[1]

It proved to be the epochal event for the Plains. What a burden of anxiety beginning to be cast off from T. C. Henry's shoulders! He could now come out in the open about his five acres. The valleys could be winter farmed! If they could grow winter wheat, they could grow all winter crops. True, these bottoms formed a very small portion of all the expanse, but Henry realized that if fully and well cultivated they would add vitally to the grain supply necessary for the good grades of cattle that the country needed in place of the cheap Texas brand.

He foresaw the values of bottom lands jumping up amazingly; the financial worth of the Desert reaching

[1] In A. T. Andreas's "History of Kansas" (p. 685), a curious and unwarranted error. It states: "The attempt (to 'rainfall wheat,' supposedly meaning fall or winter wheat raising) was not renewed until the fall of 1866, when it was undertaken by the Hodge brothers, who made a success of it, and since that time but very little spring wheat has been raised in the county, fall wheat having supplanted it." This refers to Dickinson county with Abilene as the county seat. There was scarcely any population there or anywhere on the Plains in 1866, and no farming except gardens and small patches of spring grain on banks of streams. Hodge Brothers did not come to Kansas until 1870 when hardly more than lads. They became, later, successful hardware dealers, not farmers, not to be identified as raisers of crops.

up into millions; the villages, then struggling along with no certain future, transformed into thriving towns. He foresaw hundreds of thousands of dollars for himself in the lively "turnovers."

Henry sowed several hundred acres to winter wheat on valley lands in that fall of 1871 and commenced to advertise confidently the news of his discovery locally and in the East. Instead of almost wholly "farming" the greenhorn immigration, it could now be in part farming the country itself. Yet he, like everybody else, had no thought then that the overwhelming uplands could ever be winter tilled. Even if possible to raise slim spring crops on them, these alone would represent only a lightweight agricultural region whereas a droughty country needed heavy reserves for feed for winter stock feeding. The trouble about spring crops, as farmed at the time, was that they ran into the hot winds of summer and turned out more or less short or skimpy. Winter crops matured before that period and, as it had at present been shown they could weather the winter season in the valleys, they would escape the burning July and August suns. To rely merely on spring yields gambled everything on a season's drought which could work havoc. They would not guarantee full winter feeding and were poor to market for cash.

Winter crops meant a staying power. Most profitable would it be to have something growing all the year! Droughts could not usually be thought of as lasting more than a season. The total annual precipitation likely

averaged about the same. If light in the spring, heavier in the fall or winter and *vice versa*. In either case fall or winter crops would get it.

These, from every standpoint, promised to be the thing. The valleys would then furnish small reservoirs of grain and fodder and help steady the general growth. Winter or fall agriculture justified the cost of housing or otherwise amply protecting holdings of stock fed in bends of streams, saving them from being worn down or straying to die unfed in the unsparingly open uplands. Henry now believed that since bottom lands could be fall or winter farmed, the endless uplands would become of more intrinsic worth than as mere summer pastures for cheap breeds of cattle. A homesteader with a little bottom land winter tilled could have some upland at the same time to serve him for summer pasture or a light crop of hay. A far larger population could be supported.

It must be understood that agricultural methods and habits appeared much poorer in those days in the United States than now, nothing being known of scientific farming or of plans for overcoming the drawbacks of a semi-arid land. What was then unknown was emphatically *not known*. It is easy to look back in the light of later knowledge and experience and assume that all should have been foreseen by everyone with assurance. Farmers on the Plains did not then think of good farm machinery, heavy draft horses for plowing and similar necessities even then available for the better grade of

agriculture. They possessed little money for such expensive outlays. Besides, their efforts were nearly always intentionally slack, since speculation supposedly meant the required occupation in the Desert.

The T. C. Henry experiment in winter wheat raising drew at first little attention, people believing it an accident or an exaggeration. As actively antagonistic to anything like his contemplations, there remained two important trends in public opinion. The first and obviously more critical attached itself to the Texas cattle interests and all grazing interests. While a new and glorious vista opened before Henry, the approach of the Texas Cattle Trade for the next summer began again to haunt his dreams. The ever-increasing number of farmers and other land owners speedily and widely improved the Plains. Plowed land, fencing, farm homes, were coming into vogue and apparent permanency. Even the great and only cattle highway, the Chisholm Trail, had often now been conspicuously fenced across. When the Texans came with their destructive herds, what else could be expected but more serious trouble than ever—likely another Border Warfare? And here lay Abilene, the capital, once more helpless before the armed invaders, Tom Smith dead, Wild Bill having gone away. What could be done? Surely at hand a momentous climax which could be easily imagined from experience as direful! The Texans had the idea that droughts would drive out the "fool" farmers. Yet, due to a curious kink in human nature,

disaster often attracts rather than repels, and immigrants kept coming in.

The Texans were supported in Kansas, Missouri and Chicago by associates in an industry with large sums of money invested through organizations of packers and beef commission houses and also through banks having a profitable business in handling cattle paper. Altogether they seemed aggressive and formidable. They controlled, as mentioned, public prints, political and other public men. It appeared insensate to look forward to the Texans and allies calmly lying down and submitting in face of, as they thought, misguided, indigent, irresponsible grangers trying to farm a desert and bound to produce only a zero. No one, therefore, could accurately prophesy what would become of the problem of the Plains until he saw how the livestock folk decided to act.

Early in February, 1872, the following circular, indited by Henry, was signed by four-fifths of the citizens and sent out broadcast over Texas and the West:

> We, the undersigned, members of the Farmers' Protective Association, and officers and citizens of Dickinson county, Kansas, most respectfully request all who have contemplated driving Texas cattle to Abilene the coming season to seek some other point for shipment, as the inhabitants of Dickinson will no longer submit to the evils of the trade.

The result from this circular was awaited with great suspense. Surprisingly and luckily, not another Texas

herd came to Abilene or its county. The year 1871 unexpectedly the last! As Henry wrote thirty two years afterward: "Abilene became quiet—painfully quiet. Its mortuary fame was nearly as celebrated as its 'live' infamy had been before."

Why did not the cattle Texans try to take over that region as expected? The explications evidently are as follows:

The big southern drovers and their armed satellites, the cowboys, were transients. They came but went after short stays. None showed any plan of being fixtures on the Plains because of the quick shipments and returns to Texas for new droves, and because of no feed and housing for holding herds over the winters.

And the Texans must have realized in the back of their heads that the United States Government frankly led the powerful movement to make of the American Desert a well-settled, more or less thrifty, law and order farming empire in lieu of a thinly populated, lawless, not ever very wealthy range, fostering only a nomadic civilization. For a township cut up into occupied farms would eventually represent far more population and riches for the nation than a township with grass cattle roaming over it, herded by thriftless punchers.

While the Southerners might override civilians, they evidenced a healthy respect for the Federal Government, especially from the standpoint of its protecting titles to its lands. The Lone Star men had recently emerged from the blood bath of the Civil War. There were forts scat-

tered about on the Plains and held by military companies under successful generals. Though these engaged in fighting redskins, it continued apparent they formed convenient nucleuses for the gathering of forces to put down any violent obstreperousness, hostilities, on the part of a section of the people. And back of the military stood thousands of soldier-farmers in the Desert, lately released from service in battle, who could be quickly summoned to their muskets with the use of which they could renew familiarity.

Then, too, Abilene had demonstrated how it could find marshals in Tom Smith and Wild Bill who proved equal to high-handed emergencies there. At all events, instead of a rebellion breaking out, there were known to be killed only from twelve to twenty men in Abilene during that whole four years. An annual average of, say, four. This seems incredible in view of all that frenzied armed and drinking life. Of course, other individuals became wounded in frays but recovered or found themselves hustled away perhaps to die. The fact that no civilian happened to be shot down was highly fortunate. Had there been such a case, one does not know what might have occurred. And, in truth, the actual outbreaks in strenuous Texas Street in Abilene check up as rare, fitful, sporadic, yet the uncertainty about them caused an almost constant tension and dread.

But the Texas longhorn served a valuable purpose. It had brought in some quick cash; by its pictorial advertisement, it helped in rapidly opening up that territory

and, unintentionally, in hastening the discovery that good farming could go on there. It exhibited the epochal development leading up to the far more significant epochal event of winter wheat with its consequences.

The problem of the Plains was, as stated, not political as in the Border Troubles before the war, nor religious as if a crusade, nor rebellious as in Shay's Rebellion. It remained economic. And it now appeared to promise simply an agricultural future since the great menace of Texas cattle vanished gradually and without warfare. Would not winter wheat supply the ready money which the Texans had brought?

But there persisted the other trend in public opinion on the Plains itself against the new winter wheat development: the belief that that region was a desert. There the slackers, pessimists, land speculators, declaimed against this wheat plan as absurd. The conception of that country as a grazing territory, together with associated ideas, lustily prevailed. Those who traced the hand of God still insisted on coupling this desert-like expanse with desert-like Palestine. Farming was hard, prosaic work compared with the light, sightly occupation of grazing cheap cattle or the loafing business of speculating in nominally priced lands, and was not welcome among a large section of the public.

Henry's incredible experiment with a new crop being noised about in journals in eastern Kansas, not much time intervened before he received an invitation to address a convention there. To go to conventions satisfied an

early ambition on the Plains. As a part of such publicity there was the proud custom, springing up, of riding on railroad passes. A man with free transportation stood above his fellows who had to pay fares. Railroads handed out passes freely to shippers, office holders, politicians, editors, and to almost anyone thought to hold a share of the people's confidence. For hostility commenced to spread against railroads owing to various practical or merely human causes unnecessary to go into here. Railroads could most cheaply and easily buy off or influence the public by subsidizing through free transportation those in authority, though passes increased the ardor for assemblies of discussion.

Such meetings served as the first big, organized entertainments on this border. Good theaters, concerts, looked like extravagant undertakings and, in the nature of things, seemed beyond reach. But conventions needed no foreign talent. To hire a hall didn't cost much. They afforded opportunity to outpour one's self in talk, in oratory. They gratified the urgent desires in many pioneer breasts to make speeches, to disseminate abundant ideas.

To attend such gatherings, and to be provided with railroad passes for the purpose, meant, in truth, a remarkable achievement and source of enjoyment. It offered a chance for a holiday and much treating, some imbibing. Cigars were apt to be distributed. Free meals could be picked up from those aspiring to office or wishing to

push some scheme. And to address an assembly became judged among the top-lofty honors.

Henry felt all the better about the forthcoming occasion because of the welcome news he could bring. He imagined how the gathering would leap to its feet in glee over his assurance as to the substantiality of the Plains. Winter wheat, winter crops, the agricultural solution! That wide commonwealth could have good fortune gleaming in its valleys rich and golden.

Yet his astonishment! His address roused antagonism on the floor of the hall. Winter wheat for the Desert? Fatuous theory! Such a whim would be disastrous to the Plains. Talk of the sort should be shut off in short order. The convention nearly booed Henry off his feet. He had run counter to stockmen. Livestock journals, newspapers, soon joined in jeering the man in Abilene. He was called a candidate for the lunatic asylum. He should be "assisted" in leaving the State. Even those who hoped the broad Desert might be of some little value for farming declared that Henry's ludicrous impression would play hob with sensible endeavor. Hallucinations, nonsense, being too quick on the trigger, never win the day.

The question always hung on aridity. The stockmen and allies haled the Bible into this acrimonious debate. The conviction continued unwavering among them that the good people of the Plains were to be like the good people of Palestine, offspring of Jehovah's desert and of the Holy Scriptures. In this comparatively waterless

American domain, like Judea, did not the Holy Ghost want His newly chosen folk also to tend herds over the land?

Henry happened to be resolute. As J. G. McCoy previously encountered resistance in his Texas Cattle Trade project, so now Henry met with increasing public opposition. Yet he was of such a nature that mounting troubles augmented his determination. He gave no evidence of dodging "assistance" in quitting the Plains, in being run out of the country. He had answered not only by having put out several hundred acres to winter wheat but at present sent communications to newspapers explaining and upholding his objectives. With his fighting clothes on, he went so far as to predict that even the uplands might be successfully farmed. This, he said, would not be more surprising than the idea of winter farming the valleys. The upland notion appeared to his opponents the supremest folly and they usually chucked his communications into spittoons.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE OUTCOME

The backbone of our narrative is to be recognized as representing the testing of a semi-desert by successive strata of pioneers from the East, unused to a desert condition. They became soon called on this frontier old settlers. As these strata differed in quality, it is difficult, we realize, to avoid a certain confusion about them. Yet there was also, as signalized, another backbone in the development—the high ridge of Texan inflow.

This latter backbone, while joined to the other in an adverse manner, strengthened it. Without the Lone Star invasion, the opening up of the Great American Desert, as shown, would have been slower. But you can well imagine, in the instance of the physiological curiosity of two encountering spines, how one may assert its supremacy. This proved to be the case, at any rate, around Abilene, the longhorn capital, where the two backbones of this prairie colonization early grew conflictingly in together, with the agricultural backbone finally asserting its superiority over the Lone Star spine.

To dilate a moment in two paragraphs. The Texan withdrawal from Abilene, Kansas, resulted in the begin-

ning of the end of this Texan campaign on the Great Plains of the United States. It meant a slow retreat south and west from another Gettysburg. Though six hundred thousand head of longhorns are said as a mere and likely inflated guess to have come into "Western Kansas" in 1872,[1] a large part branched off from the Chisholm Trail south of Abilene and went to Ellsworth, Kansas, west on the Kansas Pacific Railway where, though shipments were longer and more expensive, the country remained sparsely settled. A part halted at Newton, Kansas, on the Chisholm Trail and on the newly constructed Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fé Railroad there. Afterward, owing to being fenced back, the Trade hung on several years at Dodge City on that railway in southwestern Kansas. Dodge City became an imitator of Abilene. Less spontaneously picturesque, obviously a duplicate in its wicked outlawry, it became of more notorious memory. The reason is to be found in the larger advertising due to the growing facilities for spreading news after the trans-Missouri territory forged ahead into greater accessibility and prominence.

The epochal Texas cattle development on the Plains, preceding the epochal event of the discovery of winter wheat raising, not only brought, to repeat, the first financial business there, the first industry, but lifted Texas out of its cattle slump after the Civil War. Without the establishment of the Abilene market by J. G. McCoy, vast herds of Lone Star cattle would have gone some-

[1] McCoy reported 236,800 head as received in Kansas City that year.

time almost for naught. Little wonder their owners, even nowadays, express doubts as to what would have lamentably happened had it not been for the blazing of the Chisholm Trail up to the Kansas Pacific Railway at Abilene.

While the agricultural outcome became in the end triumphant on the Plains, the result was dearly purchased throughout a decade and a half of frequent failures despite successes. As this is hardly a section of our story, we shall venture to do little more than mention some of the catastrophes, crucial trials.

In the perverse experience, so often, of those old settlers, it seemed to be shown that no sooner was a big advertising bid made for immigration from the East than the Plains cut up high jinks. Had it not been said, "something might any minute spile the sow belly?" A drought, a cyclone, a grasshopper raid, a blizzard, or some wild and woolly West display, came to figure more than once as anti-climax to lofty praises. Announcements such as a "fine Eytalian climate," the serene prairies, the assured prosperity—apparently then knocked in the head!

There appeared opposition and hesitancy among the publics in the early '70's before fall farming in the valleys spread generally, but all this was followed quickly by trying to farm the uplands. In the face of the upland puzzle loomed obstacles and breakdowns. Shallow plowing and broadcasting seed grain—at first for merely sod crops—brought many a defeat and loss. The wind blew

away the seed and the sun burnt out the yields. It was seen necessary to plow deep and to drill in seed grain. Yet this required heavier plows, heavier horses and drills. Where could the money come from for that increased and large expense?

Such a program seemed in the beginning whisked away in spread-eagle talk among indigent slackers when it looked as if the god Luck might be upset by the undoubted facts shown in the successful farming cases.

"I guess we could have bought too—an' cheap fer cash—if we fellers had had the spondulics. *We* could have big draft horses an' mules an' expensive breakin' plows an' plow as deep as anybody. If a feller has a million dollars to start with, any galoot can make money then—*easy*. But the smart feller is him that can make it go with no filthy lucre to begin with."

Mischievous commentators loafed about on street corners, confusing the public sentiment.

"The Plains is allers 'twixt wind an' water anyway, only it ain't got much water. The enlightened farmers is feedin' their skimmed milk to their offspring while givin' the calves the cream. 'Cause why? 'Cause calves has a market figger at Kansas City an' chillern ain't. Ad astra per asparagus is all right fer awhile, but what Kansas wants to see is the day when she can drop the asparagus part."

The Texas Cattle Trade could be held largely responsible for the fact that among this section of the people faith in rapidly enhancing grazing land prices

went hand in hand with small faith in an agricultural future as conceived in the womb of toil. For, loosely affecting public opinion there continued the tenacious Texan belief that God did not intend the Plains to be a farming country or He would have made it one. He would not have made it upland. Strange to say, not much notion of really going counter to the plans, as interpreted, of the livestock Bible yet entered the heads of the irreligious part of the population.

In 1874 came a gigantic calamity in the form of a raid of grasshoppers which ate up "every bit of green vegetation" from the Rocky Mountains to and beyond the Missouri River. I recall that when coming home late one afternoon for supper I stepped back surprised to see what became known as Rocky Mountain locusts covering the side of the house. Already inside, they feasted on the curtains. Clouds of them promptly settled down on the whole country—everywhere, unavoidable. People set about killing them to save gardens, but this soon proved ridiculous. Specially contrived machines, pushed by horses, scooped up the hoppers in grain fields by the barrelful to burn them. This, too, was then nonsensical. Vast hordes, myriads. In a week grain fields, gardens, trees, shrubs, vines had been eaten down to the ground or to the bark. Nothing could be done. You sat by and saw everything go.

When autumn came with the country devastated, the population despaired again when seeing the insects remaining for the winter with the apparent plan of being

on hand for the next season. It seemed that they could be counted on as a curse for all time, since the Rocky Mountain locusts, as the name indicates, appeared new to science, to the civilized world. No one, accordingly, knew of their habits. And their ingenuity confounded close observers. As if intending to stay permanently on the Plains, they bored holes only in hard ground, in roads and other firm places, for their winter occupancy. Intelligently did they avoid soft ground since tenancy there would be more easily, more apt to be, disturbed.

This small locust, which inflicted the most widespread and severe insect damage that the United States, I believe, had known, breeds in the high, dry lands on the eastern slope of the Rocky Mountains, and if its food supply there becomes inadequate will use its exceptionally long wings to migrate long distances for provender. This grasshopper is reported as destructive on the Plains in 1866, and is said to have been present there sometime during the period of 1850-5. The Delaware Indians had vague accounts of a big invasion before.

To add to the terror of the locust invasion was the general accompaniment of weather tending always to be dry. Kansans—"people of the south wind." This poetic Indian meaning might bear a still more distinctive signification if it ran "people of the hot southwest wind." For continental "Western Kansas," lying in the exact center of the United States, turned out to be subject in summer to burning south or southwest winds untempered by cooling salt breezes creeping up from the Gulf of

Mexico or cooling zephyrs descending from Canada. The middle area often missed the relief that either the southern or northern areas might experience. And a steady hot current of air, though mild in velocity, brought the dreaded dry times.

How one hated to see the heavens seal their cisterns and the Plains to be sear! A few showers would dash upon the ground and run to cover in the creek and river beds, not stopping to penetrate to roots. Matters seemed, indeed, to be made worse by these spurts of moisture, the blazing sun promptly coming out afterward, baking the earth harder.

Almost hilarious, many of the old-timers during such months! They underwent the stark privations in very fair style, having been shown to be prophets with honor in their own land.

"Hee-hee! Didn't I tell you so? This ain't no farmin' country. Too droughty. Lucky fer cattle if lucky fer anything. An' these 'ere Easterners ruinin' the buffalo grass by plowin' it up! Spilin' everything. Yaps that wants to farm better stay back East where there ain't anything better to do. They have driv' out the Texas Cattle Trade. What have they got left? Mighty little, by cracky!"

People still often considered the Plains fit at best for very light spring crops. If these shrank up just before harvest, there would be left after June nothing to fall back upon during the rest of the year. The small corn areas along the streams then resembled patches of sticks.

The local livestock in 1874 had to be disposed of, fodder lacking. Pitiful little vegetable gardens shriveled. The few flower plots planted by housewives were at first bravely watered. Like tiny, ghastly totem poles did the scarred stalks afterward look.

In a hot droughty summer most of the wells and springs gave out early. Water in creeks trickled so shallowly that dogs lay panting in them while hardly able to immerse more than their paws. Then, the burning spell! The southwest wind blew at frequent intervals out of its Sahara ovens, sweeping the land with a flinty dust. You thought of it as a finely-textured burial shroud. People told the old joke: "We'd have had to soak our pigs over night so that they could hold swill." The nights proved as debilitating as the days, since humanity couldn't sleep for the heat. This was the worst of it—they couldn't sleep. No part of each twenty-four hours furnished forgetfulness of the nightmare of failure.

In that country of poor farming and upon a population heedless about laying by supplies for a scarce period, the disaster of 1874 doubled its effect. One conceded: Of what use to work? Farmers, of course, stood out of a job. They loafed in town from mid-summer on. For many said they could hardly have plowed or broken prairie. The lumps of sod needed to be knocked up by axes. Seven months before there would be a thing to do. Locusts and scanty rainfall together!

One watched the office men in towns lounging day after day at their doors or hanging out of their windows,

with nothing on hand. Business collapsed. It looked like an idiotic insult to ask anyone for what he owed. Tillers of soil could not be counted on to pay anyhow till after harvest, once a year, and now, in 1874, no harvest. The merchants, townsmen in general, were expected to cash up from month to month. They stared blankly at the streets, trying to figure how they could get through the winter with their money and credit mostly "gone up the spout." The sight of farmers dawdling in stores and saloons added to the dismalness. What if *next* year brought a blank? Too awful to contemplate! Meanwhile —it looked like sheer, unavoidable starvation.

Moral stamina? One knew how the women slouched around red hot cook stoves three times a day for the regular if scrimpy meals. Some strength *must* be kept up, some flesh *must* be kept on bones. Even wives, who had had a little pardonable vanity left, quit trying to save their complexions. They let their tresses go dry and stick out any way. Hair got crinkly, few bothering much about brushes and combs. Hollow-eyed, fagged out, the fair sex came to care little how they looked, what they wore. The story was told of seeing on a street a woman in a garment she had sewed together from the halves of different flour sacks without taking the pains to remove their brands, the result being shocking. Men swore and played poker more. Fathers dreaded to face their children who grew raggeder. As for their dirtiness, who, you might almost ask, hardly dared spare water to wash them? Husbands

hated to go home to meals, for they must meet the appeals of their wives to climb on wagons and strike out for back home.

"Sell for what you can get, John—give it away—leave it—only let's get out. I don't have to ride on a railroad. A schooner headed East looks awful good to me."

To add to such despair came letters to the Plains from eastern relatives and friends with local news of good rains, superior crops, in a country greener than ever. No hot winds, no dust—a pleasant summer! What perversity! The recipients vividly, bitterly, recalled the East with its brimming rivers and lakes of clear, cool waters, high trees, shade everywhere, old gardens teeming in vegetables, fruits and flowers. And the Plains with scarce a tree or ever a big one in prospect! Fruit? Few pretended *that* could be raised profitably. Homesick, homesick. *Why* had anybody moved west?

In the late fall, Famine commenced to stalk boldly through the land. The stocks of not only food but clothing were about exhausted, though the towns, having more means, did not suffer as much as the countrysides. The farmers, as a rule, and many townsmen didn't own overcoats. None had been thought needed in this "fine Eytalian climate." The humiliation of publicly appealing to Congress for food, for clothes, for seed grain, followed as the next affliction. That proud section of the American people fated to be, like the Indians, wards of the nation! Washington acted. Goods began to flow in and be distributed. The overcoats comprised chiefly the

army blue coats, especially meant for the "old soldiers." When you saw a springless farm wagon clattering over a winter road, with a plank for a seat, and the flaps of a blue coat flying out behind in the wind, you knew the individual was a war veteran—a man who lately helped save the United States. Eastern charities, eastern relatives, aided by shipping in staple supplies.

And this the promised Eden! The halcyon West! What a tragedy the Government led people into! Mother Nature indeed—dear, kind, old, nourishing Mother with her grasshoppers! Verily a "step-maw" Nature! The god Luck certainly went "dead back" on the Desert.

Prayer meetings being held, a few of the men who had not gone to church dropped in and sat before pulpits, heads bowed, humbled in respect. They wondered now if there might be some virtue in supplication. At least they risked no money nor chances by attending meeting. Anything, even prayer, to see mudpuddles drowning out the hoppers! But the believers in the great god Luck—the majority—stood in the main by their guns. They didn't think petitions by four hundred dollars-a-year ministers had enough breeze behind them to be shot clear up to Heaven so that the yelpings could be heard there. Wouldn't Luck bring a favorable year next time since this one could be called "a ripper"? Herein lay the dependable thing about Luck: it always changes.

Optimists said: "If the farmers on the Plains will stop their slipshod ways and buckle down to hard work like farmers back East, the Plains may 'blossom as the rose'

in spite of hoppers or anything." This lesson had then little interest among a discouraged folk. They were too concerned over getting enough food and clothing during that time of threatened hunger and nakedness. The Lem Hankers, as defeated stockmen, found cause again to rant about "these 'ere farmers" who had smashed the country with the help of the Rocky Mountain bug.

"Folks calls 'em honest farmers 'cause if they didn't call 'em that, they couldn't call 'em anything. All Jayhawkers!—fellers stealin' timber off Guv'ment land. I think this drought will teach 'em that the Plains ain't fer farmin'. But farmers never learn nuthin. That's why they're only called honest. They ain't honester than the rest of us—an' that ain't anything to brag on. Who would trust a farmer in a hoss trade any more than anybody else? Nobody. Who expects him to pay his intrus when due? Nobody. Who gives you short weight when you ain't there? The honest farmer. Who puts a false bottom of dirt in his wagon so as his load of grain will weigh heavier? The honest farmer. Remember what Captain Jack Stillwell said about cyclones on the Plains? He said it takes two men to see a cyclone out 'ere: one to say, 'Gee whiz, there she comes!' an' the other to say, 'Christianny, there she goes!' An' *I* claim it takes two men fer to watch the honest farmer: one to look out when he's comin' an' one to look out when he's goin'."

What with Federal and other public aid and a steady immigration with money in larger sums, the population lived through the great grasshopper year mainly from

necessity as well as pluck. It was a close call. But the locusts or a drought or both the next year would practically wipe out this early folk. A mighty and unsuspected blessing, however, intervened. Since low and moister regions than the Rocky Mountains cause its grasshopper progeny to die before maturity, one raid will not continue elsewhere its severest damage into the following years. This is what took place on the Plains in the spring of 1875, though it could not have been foreseen by the disheartened people. In that year and the year or two afterward this insect did not cause the harm suffered in 1874.[1]

Also the seed grain supplied by eastern charity made good, and the fortunate season in 1875 brought ample crops to meet good prices. Buoyant faith at once reestablished itself. One beheld the Sixth Principal Meridian on the top crest. The god Luck had again veered. The Plains now reigned in prosperity and was freely wagered on in terms of a wet though glowing future.

[1] The early history of this locust is covered in reports of the United States Entomological Commission, published about 1880.

CHAPTER XXV

THE OUTCOME, CONTINUED

Not very long afterward, nevertheless, another desolating scourge began widely to ravage. These scourges were thought of by livestock men as the reproof of Nature for the attempt to turn the Plains from its true destiny of grazing into that of an agricultural domain. For here, where there was seen the largest and most sudden settlement in our history, these two pests visited the land for the first time on a vast scale, like the tornadoes and blizzards. If no farming had been tried, these pests would presumably not have been known of as calamitous.

This second scourge was the chinch bug, likewise new to man as an expanding destroyer and, therefore, not understood. You went out of a morning to your beautiful grain field about ripe for harvest and returned in an hour knowing the crop stood ruined after ten months of labor and anxiety. The bug worked unmeasured loss right and left and for years made grain raising a doubtful venture. Likely the chinch bug had always been a small factor on the Plains before this time when the crop acreage became so extensive. For it is a grass insect, present undoubtedly in the native grasses. It readily

changed its feeding habits when these grasses were plowed under and the land planted to grain. Like the Rocky Mountain locust, the chinch bug did not attract attention until cultivated crops came in and invited its assaults.

During the early periods of affliction, confidence and consolation at length began to be found in a new theory, like snatching at a straw: the so-called rainfall or rain-belt theory. The idea developed that sufficient precipitation would come practically at once for agriculture provided that building railroads, stringing telegraph lines, scraping over the soil "a bit," setting out a few spindling trees and building shacks, were undertaken. This spontaneous fallacy lasted several years, even being sponsored by the Government to encourage farming in this semi-Desert. For the conception meant little work and promised to be especially helpful in enabling profitable sales of land to be made to trustful newcomers.

People on the Plains then believed, as understood from the Bible, that our globe is only six thousand years old; that the progress of man on it has occupied only six thousand years: two thousand for modern civilization; two thousand for ancient civilization; two thousand for Adam and Eve and their immediate progeny to settle up our planet, considered the object for which the universe had been created. A hurried idea! Our spectacle of an American population tackling the enigma of an arid or semi-arid region was not only novel but correspondingly hurried. Since everyone knew little or noth-

ing about it, anybody's idea seemed as good as anybody else's. The Government long remained especially ignorant concerning it. The Government had no departments nor equipments for dealing in a scientific way with climates and agriculture. It could furnish no records, no history, from which to draw pertinent guidance.

Thus the rainfall theory on the Plains fell into agreement with the general understanding of our world's rapid advancement. It shared in the notion of haste. Of small use was it to point out that Palestine, Mesopotamia, Egypt, Northern Italy, where irrigation needs to be practiced as much as ever after hundreds or thousands of years of settlement, still have too scant a precipitation to raise much. Boosters smiled at such references. Historic or scientific data—a joke! Experts! Did boomers know anything of Egypt or Mesopotamia or want to? America and Americans constituted new and wonder-working products, fully prepared to override the laws of Nature, upset history, make a laughing stock of human experience.

So the rainfall conjecture came about—so consoling to contemplate!—so fructiferous in prospect as necessarily to be true! The boosters had not read enough to believe that puny man never changed climates to any such extent. Ancient histories of many lands showed this as a fact. How could one sensibly think that what does not climatically happen in the old, old, inhabited regions could happen in a new one? This easy-going deception, whose rootage was naturally in self-interest, long caused

bankruptcies, destitution and broken hearts on the part of tens of thousands of good people lured out into this West by such propaganda.

To combat this fallacy made anyone unpopular, made scoffers about his ideas, made him enemies on almost every hand in the nation and particularly on the Plains. The present writer published an article in the *Popular Science Monthly* for February, 1890, ridiculing the harmful rainfall theory and citing evidence against it while representatives of the Government supported it. He was then living in Denver where missiles could not be thrown at him from the Desert. He forgot about this article until after writing this chapter and then found that his position had been after the years proven to be true.

Since one is rarely fortunate enough to see his standpoint justified thirty or forty years later, may we be pardoned in quoting parts of our article of 1890?

> . . . neither history nor science gives any testimony to show that the tillage of the soil and the planting of trees have any appreciable, to say nothing of a considerable, effect on the climate. Even in irrigated countries only a barely perceptible increase in rainfall has been discovered. In Spain, France and Italy, irrigation is now not only required for farming, but it is more widely practiced than ever before; yet, if the "rain-belt" theory were correct, these countries would long ago have had sufficient precipitation for successful agriculture. There is scarcely any rainfall in the valley of the Nile to-day, after centuries of cultivation and of annual floods. . . .
>
> It seems to have been taken for granted that the plains

were treeless and well-nigh grassless because of lack of rain. Whether the absence of trees is ascribable to the pulverulence of their soil, or the germless lacustrine deposit which covers the plains, or the excess of moisture, or the fires of Indians, it is clear that it is not due to rainlessness, because the dry hilltops in the midst of the arid region have some trees. In other words, there is no evidence whatever that the precipitation on the plains to-day is any greater than it was fifty or one hundred years ago; and there is every reason to believe that it is less. . . .

In the reports of the Kansas State University and the Kansas State Agricultural College we learn that the rainfall for the ten years from 1879 to 1888 is not so great as that of the previous decade. One authority on the subject has recently taken, among other series, the observations at Fort Leavenworth from 1837 to 1883, and, testing by the proper mathematical processes their variabilities and probabilities, demonstrates that there is no indication whatever of permanent climatic change. Yet Fort Leavenworth is one hundred and fifty miles east of the eastern line of the dry region. . . .

The climate, as well as the law, pays no heed to small things. It would not answer for the advocates of the (increased rainfall) theory only to claim that precipitation would be augmented *somewhere*, and not necessarily in the certain region where is found the increase of farmed lands; for it would then be very reasonable to suppose that the prevailing southwest and west winds of the plains would drive from them the moisture which the farmer there had earned. Iowa, Missouri, and eastern Kansas, instead of the dry region, would get the increased rainfall. . . .

The severe seasons of drought . . . show the whole truth of the matter to be that the westward advancing line of settlement is by no means an isohyetal one, but that it is merely a line representing in a way the overflow of the population of our Eastern States. . . .

> He who would provide the plains with an ample precipitation must remove the Rocky Mountains. Is it reasonable to suppose that three or four telegraph lines, small bunches of stripling trees here and there, and the turning over of a few thousand acres of sod, can be of any avail in changing a great dry territory into a garden? Can man so easily control Nature and her laws? Certainly not. Climates are immutable so far as the puny efforts of humanity are concerned. And it is a grave fallacy, for on the strength of it hundreds of families are induced each year to locate on the plains with the expectation of farming successfully. Failure follows, of course, and their only hope is to sell out to trustful new-comers, and move where the natural conditions are favorable to agriculture and the prosperity of farm-homes.

Government authorities came around at length to the above view. In the "U. S. Department of Agriculture, Weather Bureau: Summary of the Climatological Data for the United States, by sections—from the establishment of stations to 1922 inclusive" is this conclusion about the Plains (p. 2):

> It is undoubtedly a fact that fields of wheat, grain sorghums, and even corn now cover a large area in the western portion that was once designated as "The Great American Desert," but a rather exhaustive study of all available precipitation records, many of which were begun more than 45 years ago, fails to show any progressive change in the average annual amount or in its distribution through the year.

Through it all, in the 1870's and early 1880's, with ups and downs, the expression "hard times" became de-

pressingly familiar in the Desert. The following story told then is typical. It has become popular in other settings and circumstances, but, no doubt, its origin dates from a remote past.[1]

A man drove along a lonely road on the Plains. As he came over a rise, his sight brightened at a sign of humanity. Before him a covered wagon moved forward somewhat rapidly. It was battered, its top sagging in the middle. Behind dangled a bucket and there followed a thin, miserable calf being jerked along by a rope tied to the vehicle. The man overhauled the wagon and, according to custom in the Desert, both outfits came to a standstill for a parley. In the wagon appeared a poverty-stricken man and wife and a couple of dirty, ragged children. Manifestly they had all their possessions with them.

After preliminary civilities, out came the question,

"Quitting these parts?"

"Yap, I sold out."

"Your farm?"

"Yap, one hundred and sixty acres. The feller would only buy eighty—was skeery about takin' any more. I offered him the other eighty fer nuthin, but no—he wouldn't take it because of the extry taxes."

"You mean, you are leaving behind an eighty?"

The granger looked up and down the road to be sure

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[1] A story about an immigrant Swede in Minnesota was brought to me a few years ago as new. I found it to be a medieval "yarn" in the classic "Cent Nouvelles nouvelles" in archaic French.

no one could be seen for miles. Then leaning forward, cupping his hand beside his mouth, he whispered,

"Stranger, I slipped that other eighty into his deed when he wa'n't lookin' an' am gittin' out of the country."

The foundation for such a story was, alas, only too true. In irrigated parts of Colorado, during the panic years of the early 1890's, rich, tilled farm lands, smooth as a billiard table, with ample water rights attached that had cost five dollars an acre, could not be sold for anything. People would not take them as a gift and pay the nominal taxes on them. This was not due to lack of water as in the Desert, but to lack of market. Alfalfa, grain, did not sell for enough to pay for production.

Even as late as about 1884 on the Plains men commonly loaned only five dollars an acre on farms showing usual improvements. The great majority of land mortgages were recurringly renewed, an ordinary practice being to include in such renewals back-due interest and taxes, and insurance premiums, on the hopeful, and in fact forced, assumption that, notwithstanding all that had happened or might happen, farms were worth more owing particularly to the constantly increasing and improved quality of the immigration.[1]

To illustrate how uncertain the future of the Plains

[1] A Kansas state official writes in 1928: "The big drought on the Plains began about 1870. . . . There was more or less drought up to 1880. . . . In the hard years of Kansas such as the grasshopper years and droughts, appeals were made in eastern states for help. Much material was shipped in here to aid the people." The meteorological records fail to support this view. As much rain has fallen in one decade as another. The crop failures in the 1870's were due generally and chiefly to slack, shallow farming as since shown by improved, successful agriculture there with the same average amount of precipitation.

looked at about this time, I will report the following transaction with which I chanced to be connected. In 1881 the Missouri, Kansas and Texas Railway Company decided to close out its land department. It had left on hand perhaps a hundred thousand acres of the choicest land lying on the very eastern and central edge of the Plains, only about seventy miles west of Topeka. Despite its advertising, the railroad could not dispose of this acreage. It went begging, at almost any nominal price.

In despair the company sent its deputy land commissioner to Abilene to coax the reputedly optimistic T. C. Henry to take those lands off the hands of the railroad. The figure averaged one dollar and eighty seven and a half cents an acre. Yet Henry appeared too afraid. Even his faith in the country had sunk rather low. The deputy was sent back to Abilene by his superiors. The land must be sold. Ten per cent down with very long and easy payments represented the terms now offered.

T. C. Henry finally closed the deal but apparently could find no one in Kansas, on the Plains, in the Mississippi Valley, to join him in the purchase. Not farther west than western New York State was he able to form his syndicate for the speculation. Fear about the Plains scared off most people. As a matter of extreme prudence the purchasers sold out the lands in a year or two at a small profit to individual buyers, the net return realized being about a dollar an acre. Had the syndicate held on four or five years, their profits would have been enormous. For in the latter half of the 80's a boom struck

the Plains. Values shot up high. They sank back naturally after the balloon deflated, but from that time onward good, substantial land prices were usually maintained and a satisfactory average of prosperity enjoyed, such as seen there to-day.

Dr. L. W. Spring said in his "Kansas" (p. 308), written about 1884:

> . . . though visited in 1874 by plagues of locusts which desolated large districts, devouring fruits, vegetables, and grains with inexhaustible voracity, so that the familiar story of destitute, starving Kansas was heard once more, yet few American commonwealths have ever made so much material progress in twenty years.

The advanced and permanent state of things on the Plains was due to improved methods in farming, not to any increase of rainfall, for there had been none. The poorer sort of farmers and other similar local land owners gradually starved out or got crowded out and moved on west. The better sort, taking their places, plowed deep and drilled in grain as in the East. They broke the prairies with 14-inch breaking plows drawn by big horses for not only wheat but corn. From the time of the winter wheat discovery in 1871 to about 1886—fifteen years—there was, accordingly, a painful industrial parturition when many settlers hovered on the verge of financial extinction and the Plains seemed on the point of lapsing virtually into a desert.

Despite all the rebuffs, backsets, failures and the de-

lays of new and costly experiments, the winter wheat program, itself, had been carried through. In four years from 1871 the eastern part of the Great Plains from north to south, from east to west, lay shining with winter wheat fields in summer and impressed itself upon the agricultural notice of the nation. This wheat meant cash, and the Desert needed cash more than anything except more rainfall. The uplands soon had been found good for agriculture.

In the van of wheat growers was T. C. Henry himself. Annually, for several years beginning with 1875, he displayed solid square miles of winter wheat at Abilene. His "five thousand" acre farm became of country-wide fame.[1] It lined both sides of the Kansas Pacific Railroad and beamed in splendor, its glistening waves of grain extending miles—a sea of rich glory, a sign that a new empire of affluence had been added to the national realm.

This breeze-laden luster, like that of molten gold, shifting from pale to deep hues, rapturously convinced one of the dictum of Ruskin: "a thing of useful beauty, made by Nature and the handiwork of man together, is superior to, and more to be worshiped than, any idle, barren beauty that Nature alone affords." Brakemen on trains cried out to passengers: "We are now passing through T. C. Henry's big wheat field—five thousand acres—biggest in America." During a decade this farm,

[1] There were about 3500 acres in this field, the rest of his crop being scattered about in the county.

helping attract immigration by being periodically written up in the eastern press, was a tremendous advertisement for the Plains, and Henry became styled during a score of years the Kansas Wheat King.

So in the end the fireside and the shorthorn obtained a complete victory in the American Desert over the public range and Texan longhorn—the formidable Lone Star steer. The Indian and buffalo, cowboy, pistol and rotten whisky, gambling saloons and bawdy resorts, had had their day. The home, the housed bed with white sheets, took the place of the outdoor skillet and blankets in the open. Justice was to rule from the court room instead of the saddle, and woman came as a stately figure into her own. The farm and the durham stood out as kings of enterprise. For reasons sketched, the Government and railways had pushed forward this kind of civilization. It meant more population, more wealth, a more Christian condition, more collective happiness.

The United States Congresses proved to be right. The Homestead and Preëmption Acts at last represented a colossal success. Under them about one hundred million acres—an area seven-tenths that of France—became improved or occupied and converted as a total into a highly productive asset. The Plains—Kansas with the other commonwealths—changed into an important granary for the nation and waxed rich in blooded livestock. To the fore in agricultural and other progress, the justly proud Sunflower State!

As T. C. Henry wrote in 1902:

What a transformation of these broad prairies and fertile plains since then! What an empire one generation of men has already built here! What grand institutions have been reared! The innumerable churches and schoolhouses are evidence that this magnificent development has been more than merely industrial and material—the moral forces have played a prominent part. And, moreover, you are a homogeneous people all the way to the Rio Grande. Change raiment, and the Texan might be taken for a Kansan now. Texas is the Kansas of the South; and Kansas typifies the loftiest Americanism.[1]

Thus Winter Wheat conquered the Chisholm Trail on the Plains.

[1] Kansas Historical Collections, vol. 9, p. 526 *et seq.* Also for the quotation from Henry on our pages 285 and 307.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE GREAT PLAINS AND ITS PIONEERS

That Great American Desert in its original wild charm and inspiration has considerably disappeared. It has emphatically disappeared in its eastern section. The describers who can deftly paint the pretty, undulating, galloping prairies are now too late to see it as a unit. This eastern section is—what an altered Land!

To behold it now, disfigured by the industrious hand of man, is to behold, so to speak, a virgin violated. Its brown fields of upturned soil give it a daubed surface. Its fences inclose the vision. Its rectangular roads check up direction as well as wandering speed. Its countless houses and stables draw attention from the unfettered worship of Nature. Its scarred face vitiates its primeval sublimity. It attracts distinctively agricultural and live-stock experts with their noses in the soil, in granaries, in cattle and hog pens. The period of its former virginity has ceased. Soon will it become a mere memory to be traced dimly, more or less inaccurately, in history while fading away in attenuating romances.

And this, as seen in our Chapter III, is already in danger of coming to pass. The Chisholm Trail in its significance is practically forgotten or minimized in the stand-

ard annals of Kansas. There existed trails from east to west rivaling the Santa Fé in celebrity—the Oregon, the Great Salt Lake. But the Chisholm alone reached from south to north. It alone bore in an armed force white men of one civilization against the white men of another civilization. Summer passed for its ruling season and that decided what the Plains should eventually be like. Only the Chisholm can be called a true Kansas or Plains trail, with central Kansas for its object. The Santa Fé and Oregon Trails merely passed through the region, carrying people across and out of it to other El Doradoes. Into the bosom of this Desert the grand Chisholm artery, by contrast, was the first to pour life blood in vast volume. And its wealth of immense, gay-colored herds presented an abundance of pictorial and mortal heroism between white men, making the scene of the Santa Fé and Oregon traffic seem composed of thin and scrawny lines of contest with only redskins.

Yet, to repeat, the remembrance of the Chisholm Trail, like that of Marshal Tom Smith, has been largely obliterated, with its skeletons and sunken graves, its fever ticks, its large horseflies, its sour smells of slews in the bottoms. No markers fix the route. Even its intersection with the Santa Fé Trail claims no stone, I understand, to signalize the spot while points of less moment stand out identified.

Similarly the important and spectacular Abilene of our country's history has dropped into obscurity, though it left a namesake in the city of Abilene, Texas. The

former was permitted to sink unrecorded, unsung, into the arms first of a lean, then of a fat, agricultural well-being, except as a cheap and misleading caricature in wild-west fiction and the "movie" theater. The international, impartial Baedeker only says of it: "Large crops of wheat and other grains are raised here." Such are the quirks in men's short memories. Such are the disproportions in the perspectives of even the near past where foothills are made mountains and mountains, foothills.

The word pioneer is defined in dictionaries as "one who goes before, as into the wilderness, preparing the way for others to follow." In a broad sense all the types of early people in that Desert, whom we have attempted to describe, were pioneers. Along with the majority represented by good immigrants stood out the Texan cowboy and drover, the saloon-keeper, gambler, the "bad man," killer of white men, the misleading pessimist, the misleading optimist. All are to be called pioneers under the definition, for they brought money, energy of whatever kind, and made business of various sorts where there had been a blank. They prepared or opened up the way for those who followed.

But it is the fashion to exclude all except one generalized kind of people in considering that population. This exclusion concerns, in a word, the transients. The term pioneer there has come narrowly, yet properly, to embrace the kind who *remained*—who "stuck by" the country and in the main won out, leading to the sane,

prosperous and moral development of the Plains. This kind was composed of a middling class and a lower class of settlers and townspeople urged forward by a few outstanding men. We have sought to give snapshots of these classes—their poverty, their dress, their habits, their limited education as it seems to us, the poor homes and business places, the ideas and sort of talk heard among the "smart Alecks." We have sought to show that that frontier folk usually measured up at least as well as possible for any people, in view of the very restricted nature of the surroundings in which they were reared.

We have hoped at times, by throwing light on the exceptional types and individuals,—by describing those who stepped forward as cleverly or boldly witted, idiosyncratic or diverting and, therefore, perhaps more entertaining in their various ways,—to help set forth the mass of people as a whole. For this majority likely furnished rather dull reading alone, being for the most part humble and prosaic plodders whose lives lacked picturesque imagination, piquant originality. As if to brighten and amuse this mass, characters of the Lem Hanker and Curly stripe had been apparently propelled by Luck through it, in a faint way like lightnings illuminatingly shot through a clouded mass of sky.

And possibly more than all have we tried to picture the extreme adversities and privations which that frontier people underwent. They were pioneers in actuality, not pretending to be for the fun of the thing. They faced

stern and unfriendly realities which now and then nearly overwhelmed them. They differed necessarily from Easterners living east under well-civilized and softer circumstances. The sufferings of that old border population should be realized more than anything else. Not only, as observed, was their unfavorable, uncomfortable situation due to an adverse natural environment needing to be "bucked," but to undesirable folk who also flocked into that Desert. These, too, had long to be combated.

It seems a present trend among writers on history to bring down great characters into figures of mortal frailty and to lift up those who have been regarded highly unworthy into merely human and more or less excusable personages. At any rate, despite sugarcoatings of past heroes and of ancestors, close readers of historical data well know that the peoples from whom we sprang were far from saints and that the human stock has slowly and painfully progressed to the present level which does not yet rise to meet the lofty tests of critics in quest of ideals. To write of men and women more as they actually existed is coming into vogue, and the esteem for them is as frank, notwithstanding, as it is genuine. Are historic men who first made the American nation less revered and honored because it is now common knowledge that the characters and habits of some of them left much to be desired when judged by modern standards? Is not the candid recognition in many ways of the failings of those who once lived the best basis for expecting a

steady improvement? What practical good can result from extravagantly whitewashing forbears, thus placing them apart from their real relation to life?

In our emphasizing the dread poverty, hardships, they endured, the frontier men and women in that Great American Desert have been perhaps looked at largely in these pages from what may be presumed to be at present main standards of civilization. This is in order that the contemporary, non-pioneer reader may be able to judge more distinctly. Those settlers were necessarily, from such an angle, at a disadvantage. When they are more fairly if narrowly estimated by frontier standards, their worth rises to view, and this merits, on the whole, most respectful homage. It is not, in the last analysis, more just to be facilely critical of those people than of their environment which forced the unideal on them in the strife to survive.

Should we not fairly agree that the frontier population on the Plains in that tobacco chewing and tobacco spitting era exhibited traits and modes of existence seemingly intolerable in our day? Otherwise would it appear we must acknowledge, when admitting the shortcomings of the present generations, that our race is going down hill; that our ancestors at least erred in giving us birth.

To the first credit of the middle and lower classes of the pioneers who stayed in that American Desert with their occasional leaders was their ability to hang on. This, ennobled by their creed and habits of hospitality, meant courage, a tenacious hardihood and self-reliance,

a certain resiliency, and a willingness to undergo the lack of almost everything making life well worth living. Toughened to exposure and defeat, ready to risk their little all on what card the Unknown might deal out to them, never discouraged for long, the old settlers put up generally a bold front, dodged blows and, it seemed, dared the open wilderness and the god Luck to do their worst. To face the game required something like chalky poker countenances, nerve, bluffing.

The sovereign fact remains: those frontier people opened the path. To know how they did it one should know what they were like. Life around them could not be intended for sleek monks and pale nuns accustomed to be stowed away from contests and temptations into a cloistered state of innocence. That pioneer environment appeared more than rude, rough, lawless. It often stood out as diabolical. Had not Satan to be fought with some of his own fire?

About the beginning of this twentieth century, I walked up and down a rather vaguely outlined and somnolent street. There at hand, the abandoned little stone schoolhouse of my boyhood of thirty years before. There, the old church where I had been luckily able at times to earn merit tickets in Sunday school. These two edifices, then towering before me, now looked lamentably small and forlorn. Here on the corner had been the Red Front store where I daily traded for our family. There, the Bull's Head and Old Fruit saloons, here the Alamo, here the calaboose. All over the spot once haughtily ruled ruf-

fian Texan cowboys, but also Tom Smith and Wild Bill. Along here Tom Smith patroled on Silverheels—here where his great oil lamp feat took place. I now stood on the very spot where Wild Bill sat gambling, with his back to the wall. Difficult to imagine the life that once teemed hereabouts in summer! Not a saloon nor outfitting establishment now! Instead of the old familiar smells of longhorns and new lumber, there wandered in the air odors of domestic plants.

I brushed my eyes. It all seemed a wild dream of the past in this almost abandoned quarter, now merged into the opiate peace of generations. For this had been the celebrated, notorious Texas Street of the first cattle capital of the Plains—the farthest line north where a new kind of Pickett's charge was turned back at nearly the same parallel as Gettysburg's.

Inhabitants of the Great Plains nowadays may look upon its silent, fruitful farms stocked with thoroughbreds and easily say "it had to be". Little can they realize how much doubt and danger once hung over that land, what contentious, blood-shedding, heart-breaking sacrifices and despairs were endured to secure these untroubled and profitable possessions for these descendants and successors. The present development might well have failed to exist there by reason of another destiny. Had not an almost forgotten town marshal, with hundreds of lives and hundreds of thousands of dollars at stake, been ready to die in his boots, what the result? Underneath the names of the John Browns and Jim Lanes in

Broadway in Abilene in 1875. This street runs at (approximately) a right angle from the end of the former Texas Street's northern branch.

Kansas should be inscribed the name of Tom Smith who unflinchingly first stood forth like a stonewall for the Northern plowboy instead of the Southern cowboy when "Western Kansas", all our farming Great Plains, as a young mother, needed defense and protection in their travail.

APPENDIX

A CONTROVERSY

For the guidance of historians a futile sally into the historical realm, undertaken apropos of some matters contained in this volume, should be described not for contentious purposes but in the interest of accuracy.

Except McCoy's volume (1874), the only book purporting to represent early Abilene, Kansas, had been, I believe, Emerson Hough's popular thriller "North of 36," published in 1923-4. It is a mythical tale of the first half of 1867 about a Texas cattle drive headed by a twentieth-century moving picture heroine as owner. The drive went to Abilene along the general route of what came to be known as the famous Chisholm Trail. The story was held to be a fine and indisputable sample of wild-west fiction as true history. Since many readers of such novels appeared uncertain as to what is or ought to be history or fiction, or thought the two can be united successfully, with the latter having superior rights, major errors in the book should be indicated for the serious student.

First, a word as to this author. Mr. Hough, born in Iowa in 1859, dying in 1923, did not go west of the Missouri River until 1881—fourteen years after the date

of his narrative. In his last years he became a successful popularizer of a part of the West through his lively pages. He was a fictionist, emphatically disclaiming being a historian. He is not known ever to have been in Abilene, at least as a writer.

History he dismissed in his words "rather dull reading." Looking upon fiction as supreme over it when writing this tale, he even perverted facts set forth in McCoy's book while mistreating its author, although he said in his Author's Note that he "rested most largely" on McCoy's account. On April 20, 1923, he wrote:

> Of course you know that in writing such a book as "North of 36," we are dealing with fiction absolutely and the characters are all strictly imaginary as well as most of the incidents. All I can attempt to do is to give general fidelity to the historical facts of that long-ago period, without claiming to write history at all. Indeed history is rather dull reading, don't you think?

One finds the following salient historical distortions in the story.

1. Representing the completion of the transcontinental railroad route to the Pacific as in 1867 instead of 1869 (p. 78). Apparently this was done to heighten the effect and significance of the setting.

2. Displaying Abilene as quite a full-fledged town at a time when no such town existed.

3. Showing Drovers' Cottage as opened when it had not been thought of.

4. Representing McCoy (called McCoyne) as mayor

and Wild Bill as marshal in 1867 instead of 1871 (p. 364).

5. Making McCoy and Chisholm meet though they never met. The former on his page 92, in 1874, speaks of Chisholm as having merely been heard of.

6. Locating Lou Gore in Abilene in 1867. She arrived there in 1868.

7. Giving out the first shipment of Texas cattle from there as about July 1 of that year in lieu of September 5.

8. Representing McCoy, the one important man and organizer of that whole Texas cattle enterprise, as then a carouser in saloons and a co-owner of a bawdy establishment—"dance hall and saloon" (pp. 328-31). This was a gratuitous misrepresentation for the evident purpose of making the tale more juicy. At that time (1860's) McCoy stood out in Abilene as a practicing Christian, with an estimable family. He was a leader in religious affairs and my first Sunday school superintendent.

9. Loosely stigmatizing the early Abilene citizens as not averse to mixing in with Texans despite the latter's depraved life in Abilene as shown in Hough's pages 390-1. Abilene men are made to appear as frequenters of saloons, and no decent Abilene women are mentioned except Lou Gore. From the vague, disjointed, reckless portrayal the reader is left to infer what he pleases, preferably the worst about Abilene pioneers. One thing is clear: since the author describes McCoy, the father of

Abilene, as partly engaged in the open business of whoremastership, it would have been natural to exhibit his fellow-citizens and followers as of a low-grade morality and ready to consort with Texans in debauchery. Essentially puritanic in principle and habits and from the East, Abilene residents, instead of associating with Texans socially or in a saloon life, always dreaded their coming and were constantly shocked by their unholy performances on Texas Street. The only contact lay in the exchange of supplies for money. But to present the residents otherwise made a more spicy "yarn."

10. Picturing Abilene home-folks as joining in a Fourth of July celebration with Texans. This mistook wholly the temper of the time there. There was no such celebration in Abilene during Lone Star days. Had there been, the Texans would not have participated. Their anti-Yankee, anti-U. S. Government animosities remained so bitter that Old Glory, to avoid trouble, never flapped on Texas Street. It was too soon after the Civil War. The Alamo and the Lone Star frankly manifested the Texan kind of patriotism. Old-timers and Texans have since written that the feeling between these two politically antagonistic groups was "sure bad" (*Adventure*, Dec. 30, 1924) in that Reconstruction time. Wm. M. Brewer of Abilene in 1870 (*Adventure*, Nov. 10, 1924):

> The (Henry's) criticism that these (Texan) men would celebrate the Fourth of July at that time as described by Emerson Hough is certainly well-taken, because almost all of the cowboys, and a very large proportion of the gamblers,

were Southern sympathizers and many had served in the Confederate ranks. . . .

11. Representing Wild Bill in an erroneous manner as being in Abilene in 1867. He was only in Abilene from the spring to early fall of 1871, and his life was different, as may be judged from our Chapter 21. On page 409 of "North of 36":

> "You remind me of Agnes," said he (Wild Bill) simply. "That's my wife. She's back home."

He had not heard of Agnes. He married her in Cheyenne, Wyoming, March 5, 1876 (Wilstach). His celebrated fight with the McCanles (not McCandless) people was not east of Abilene in 1860 (p. 316) but at Rock Creek, Nebraska, July 12, 1861. In Wilstach's "Wild Bill Hickok" Hough is corrected as an historian on the subject. On page 55 he is taxed with having repeated old versions already published—versions which Wilstach's researches find unreliable.

In his Author's Note Hough said: "Fiction cannot be exact, else it would be history and not fiction." He clouds this somewhat by adding: "That it (fiction) should fairly reflect the spirit of its chosen day goes without saying." Also he wrote, as seen in his above letter about this book: "All I can attempt to do is to give general fidelity to the historical facts of that long-ago period, without claiming to write history at all."

Hough was not only not on the ground in the 60's

but he made no serious study of early Abilene documents nor consulted those who were there at the time. Evidently he considered it proper as a fictionist to warp historical facts and degrade historical characters in order to attract readers fond of the debased. Yet in his Author's Note: "As to the great pastoral days of the West, it is high time for a fiction that may claim to be faithful and reverent."

His claim to "general fidelity" led astray some of his supporters as a, or the, leading historian of the West. They asserted that his history was accurate or that, even though it wasn't, he knew how to give and did give a veritable picture in "North of 36." But it became apparent that if his underlying facts were wrong, his picture was apt to be so or of a counterfeit stamp. We have noted his exhibition of McCoy and Abilene citizens.

Another mistake, giving a false glamor, may be mentioned. He introduced a girl as owning and heading a Texas cattle drive to Abilene. No such thing ever occurred, and Gross, Edwards, Brewer, so state. It was out of key. Gross lived there the whole time from 1867, and Edwards and Brewer in 1870-1. Gross in an Abilene newspaper in 1925:

> I never knew during my five years there during the Texas cattle trade of a single woman coming to Abilene over the trail with the herds from Texas.

Brewer wrote:

> The idea of women accompanying a herd of cattle from Lockhart, Texas, to Abilene, Kansas, and presumably the

> first herd on the trail, is certainly far-fetched and I consider that Emerson Hough was drawing very considerably on his imagination when he introduced the Texas girl and her Negress companion and cook into his story.

A daughter of McCoy in a letter to me, Nov. 17, 1924:

> Am certain he (her father) would "turn in his grave," so to speak, could he but know that even in fiction it was told that a girl made this drive.

Seeing that "North of 36" was being taken as a true account for the year 1867, I called attention, in *The Literary Digest International Book Review* of November, 1923, to some of the shortcomings. It seemed a duty not to let the story pass unreservedly into the future as dependable history. Like the book, my review naturally concerned itself with the year 1867, as appears from the repeated mention of that date. The review was surprisingly attacked, often in violent cowboy style, by persons with no personal knowledge of the subject, with no proper authority. Some of them had not been born until years later. None ever lived on the Plains in the 1860's.

Their method generally adopted may be called indirect. Instead of trying to prove that Hough in this book stood out as strictly right,—the major duty to the public,—this impossible task became shifted conveniently and the reviewer was made out as wrong by usually juggling or suppressing dates. Also, the familiar course of misquoting, using garbled reports, as well as misstating the situation as to any particular year, was uproariously

followed. Any obligation to true history or to a public wishing to know all the facts remained furthest from these minds.

To establish the historical by clamor in lieu of patient research and circumspect statement turned out to be the wild purpose. Naturally, confusion arose among all these assailants of history and defeated their sortie. As indicated, some maintained that Hough in "North of 36" was a reliable historian; some said he was not accurate but had the right to distort the truth and yet be considered authoritative. Others declared that the tableau was correct despite its so-called facts. Still others looked down on history as a public prostitute which the fictionist can legitimately enjoy the use of or abuse as he wishes. Mature men on the spot in the 1860's found themselves ignored. Failing to admit that I, alone among the "critics," lived on the Plains then, they gave me out to be a Frenchman, or an Eastern "dude," following the common cowpuncher idea that a man east of the Alleghenies may be safely set down as a "dude." These notions about writing history were curious and nearly all periodicals and newspapers declined to print the diatribes.

In the interest of the historical, the qualifications of some of these self-appointed authorities should be noted and shown as valueless on the precise topic at issue. Certain ones who sallied into print belonged to what evidently may be called the wild-west fiction industry. It seems that some such fictionists for both story and the screen backed up one another at any cost to historical facts

and to historical characters. They regarded it apparently necessary for personal success that such an output as "North of 36" be emphasized before the public as of authentic worth. So the popular leader, the imaginative Hough, was rallied to by such writers and producers as if fearing their own productions would suffer if the public got the idea that they were not necessarily reliable historically.

Among the first and most aggressive came forward Eugene Manville Rhodes, a wild-west fictionist, born in Nebraska in 1869. His chief title to fame consisted of being a cowboy twenty-five years in the wastes of New Mexico—around the 1890's and 1900's. His contributions, it appears, sounded too abusive as a rule to be published by recipients who, for that matter, might well be excused since it was not apparent why he of New Mexico should be an authority on Abilene and its Trail at a time before his birth.

His excursion illustrated largely a disregard of dates and a wholesale extolling of Hough as the outstanding and reliable historian of the entire West of all time: "pastmaster of all wilderness lore, mountain, forest and plain; also a profound scholar and student of the West." Rhodes gave away at the outset the pivotal historical point by claiming that Hough, he himself and "writers," as in "North of 36," have the right of way over history. "Mr. Hough telescoped his dates here, deliberately, justifiably and wisely, in accordance with the terms of his yet unexpired license, as writers do when needful." If they

have this right, they have, of course, the right to twist history in any other way and also the facts about anything. In other words, the object of wild-west fiction is to make money by entertaining readers, not to bring out history regardless of financial profit. *The Saturday Evening Post*, a conspicuous publisher of such fiction, seemed to take the view in an editorial that such stories are understood or assumed to be classically foursquare with history. The *Post* did not agree in principle with Rhodes's "jazz" idea.

Candor and consistency did not develop apparently among the virtues at his command. While proclaiming that Hough was not, and did not need to be, exact, but condemning anyone questioning his supremacy as a historian, Rhodes wrote in a letter in March, 1924, not thinking of its publication:

> To be sure, I sensed a telescoping of dates as to Abilene, and a lack of the feeling of sureness and accuracy. But Mr. Hough was in a desperate state of health as he penned the last pages. In fact he believed himself to be dying. The result is easy to see . . . these things show where the pen was slipping from the nerveless fingers . . . it is evident that he did not take up the burden of life again, to the extent of careful revision of the last few chapters. We can forgive him that. For in spirit and truthfulness, and a "fair intent" to show forth the honor and decorum of life in those days, this book ranks with the highest.

Here Rhodes let the cat out of the bag, confessing to the inward story of a volume, a patchwork of historical errors, given out by a hand made irresponsible by sick-

ness. It accounts for the glaring incongruities in the pages apart from historical matters. But herding cattle a quarter of a century on the wild ranges of New Mexico had not made Rhodes's moral courage very robust, for he did not share this information with the public nor with his fellow-agitators. He let them go on month after month declaring that Hough, as in "North of 36," was a master of history and truth about that western life and its pioneers.

Another evidence of Hough's unaccountability in his illness during this period is the following, taken from his letter dated April 20, 1923:

> I hope you will like the latter part of the book, when the herd gets up into Kansas, in the time when Abilene was a baby. I have a character there whom I call McCoyne—I suppose your father's book had so great an influence on me that I almost stole his name, although certainly not his character. He was one of the many admirable men who made the West and you should be proud of his memory. Yours very faithfully,
>
> Emerson Hough.

This, as seen, was to a daughter of McCoy whom Hough had traduced as a pioneer in 1867, advertising him as partly supporting his family on the profits of prostitution.

The case of "North of 36" and its historian might appropriately end here. But we continue with the egregious record. In many a town are residents eager to join in the calumniation of its past inhabitants by out-

siders. This happened in the present instance. One H. L Humphrey, a lawyer, settled in Abilene about thirty years after our date in question. Apparently seeing a chance to emphasize the defamation of pioneer Abilene citizens as if he had a grudge against the town, he wrote in support of Hough as their historian.

His vivid imagination leaped to take the place of what he didn't know. He alone was rash enough to construct a town there in 1867 in general accord with Hough's sketch instead of McCoy's. Abilene, not so advanced as to have, as pretended, a town brass band, owned to a plank for a railroad station then and later. Gross in *The Abilene Daily Reflector*, April 24, 1925:

> The only music in Abilene in 1867 was from the prairie dogs and coyotes; no stockyards until Oct., 1867; no livery barn or stables; no dance hall; no barber shops; no town organization; no mayor, no Wild Bill; no 4th of July celebration or no Drovers' Cottage hotel in 1867. . . . In 1868 it (Abilene) saw the first movement to build permanent buildings and homes. . . . Most of our magazines of to-day will print anything furnished them by Wild West story writers and get by with the stuff. . . . I only kick when they call their stuff "History."

In his deluding zeal Humphrey, to hurry up this history to confirm Hough, gave erroneously the date of the opened Drovers' Cottage as in July, 1867, and the date of Wild Bill's marshalship as in 1870 and 1871. He also indulged in misquoting. He took a sentence from its context which states 1867, changed the words to read

"no women came over the trail," and applied it to all the Texan years at Abilene.

Not content with his own efforts, he enlisted the assistance of E. C. Little. Little came there in 1871 as a boy. He was now in his last illness in Washington, a Congressman from another district, not having lived in Abilene for many years. He, likewise, could offer no individual acquaintance with our subject and seemingly harbored a grudge against Abilene, for he indicated an unflattering comparison between present-day Abilene and its residents and early Abilene with its "golden days" in that "fairyland of adventure and romance, its stirring events and stirring men." Texas Street—a fairyland of golden days!

Only a very small part of Little's contribution refers to our topic and this part contradicts Hough and Humphrey and confirms my position. "Mr. Hough's story needed the settings and surroundings of a year or so later than the first herd and the novelist filled them in a little ahead of time." Little's dislocated letter is nearly all about schoolboy, social town gossip in the 70's, having no relation to our subject of the life in cattle camps and prairie "schooners" in the 60's. Yet this gossip alone became quoted as if in substantiation of "North of 36."

Humphrey and Little put themselves in the way of allowing their names as Abilenites to be circulated as agreeing to the state of moral corruption of the first Abilene denizens and to the befouling of that early nest. Readers would naturally conclude that since people of

the town appeared not only to acknowledge the correctness of Hough's tableau but to glory in it, it must be true. Southern communities have a way of handling a citizen who encourages a description lending itself to the view that their early folk belonged to a dissolute class and spreading a taint of illegitimacy over the descendants there and elsewhere.

The only historian venturing to uphold the author of "North of 36" was a young Texan adjunct professor, W. P. Webb. By identifying himself always with "History Department, University of Texas," he lent color to the inference or impression that he wrote with the authority of his Department and, to this degree, the authority of his university. But the rule there as in other colleges means: in such cases writers speak only for themselves. This rule is, unfortunately, not known by the general public. When a man adds to his name State Department, Washington, D. C., he is understood to be doing so with the knowledge and permission of the Department. The University of Texas through its History Department was thus placed in the public mind by Webb as setting its seal of approval on Hough in his book as historically dependable.

Webb, a Texan, born in 1894, lived in Texas and had obviously never been in Kansas to consult its documents as to a time a quarter of a century before his nativity. In place of offering specific proofs of his statements, he relied on his title—"History Department, University of Texas." The reason why he abandoned his paid duties

under employment by a great State to present historic facts and truths was apparently that he took vehement offense as a Texan at this paragraph in my review:

> Gloss and glamour cannot well be harmonized with the grim life of those wiry frontiersmen of the cattle camp and prairie "schooner." They were gaunt, homely, hungry, leading a rawbone and rawhide existence. Many excellent traits had they, but their life was necessarily hard, even to sordidness. They and their few women-folk furnished figures too wizened, weary, forlorn, for the buoyant pages of adolescent pageantry. They would not feel at home in the West that Mr. Hough depicts.

Webb applied Texan here to cattle camps on the Plains. Yet he swallowed without affront this page (390) from "North of 36" concerning Texans in Abilene:

> The sun sank gently back of the grasslands encircling Abilene. The night chill came, the quivering wail of the coyotes crept closer to the outskirts of the town, the unbelievably brilliant stars came out to illuminate a many-splendored night. But to these things Abilene paid little heed. She held high festival on her day of triumph.
>
> The fumes of liquor, the reek of packed humanity filled each insignificant room along Liquor Lane in Abilene. Especially crowded were the two more ambitious places, where dancing was obtainable in connection with strong drink. Here the scene was such as might best be forgotten as a part of the record of the outlands. There were a dozen or more women, or those who once had been women; and with these, in an obscenity that should balk any pen, a hundred or two hundred men danced.
>
> A general confusion, many voices arising continuously, passed out of the open windows and open doors. The stamp

> of feet, shoutings, senseless laughter, shrill hysteria of females excited by drink, the coarser basso of males excited likewise, joined in a curious roar whose sensuous undertone resembled no other sound or blend of sounds in all the world. In no corner of the world have the primitive instincts of man found fuller loosing than in the border capitals of the cow trails.

It will be observed that, indulgently, no notice of Lone Star morals was taken in my comment above, but that Hough, accustomed to paint tough customers, felt even *his* pen balking at the scene he gives of Texans and the Abilene population. The Lone Star professor had nothing except approval for this author of fiction who had damned the memory of Texans for all time, while the professor became incensed because I did not present them like well-fed, handsome Broadway actors. Physical appearance, not vice, stirred him up and I, not Hough, had "maligned."

Webb, not knowing that Hough's friend Rhodes admitted Hough's incompetence when producing the book, sought industriously in print and by correspondence to make readers believe that "North of 36" was an authoritative historical account and its author an exalter of Texans and pioneers. He may have led cowboy Texans who had not read the book to join in hurrahing over it, a picture of their old-time infamy.

He can hardly be excused merely by his youth and inexperience, for even elementary ethics did not appear to enter into his conception of professorship in its obligation to put the public right as to the candid truth. He withheld the facts that "North of 36" was a tale only

about 1867; that neither Hough nor he nor any of his fellow-agitators had sojourned in Abilene; that my family and I lived there during its Texas cattle days in the 60's. He did not caution readers about the historical errors in the book. Mostly ignoring the date 1867 and Abilene and its Trail as the subject, he expanded his comments across other years and regions. This method enabled him easily to make statements applicable to the one look mistaken when applied to the other.

Webb's value as a historian here is seen in his dismissal of the famous Chisholm Trail with: "The Chisholm Trail was unique because there was no such trail—there were trails, continually shifting." While championing "North of 36" as history he heedlessly tried to undermine it by denying the existence of its basis, namely, Hough's "great north-and-south pastoral road" to Abilene—this trail. The old, historic Trail from the Red River to Abilene, called the Chisholm Trail and afterwards, also, the Abilene Trail (owing to later trails springing up to other points), was about as well-known as the Kansas Pacific Railway. The Government map noted in our Frontispiece, McCoy, C. H. Rust in "The Trail Drivers of Texas," Wm. M. Brewer in *Adventure,* Nov. 10, 1924, not to mention the other authorities, testify to this effect. That the map gives only this Trail shows thereby, as we have said, this Trail's uniqueness and importance, as recognized by Hough himself. Brewer wrote:

> . . . Abilene, Kansas, came into prominence . . . as a shipping point for Texas cattle to Kansas City and Chicago, which had been driven up the old Chisholm trail, and held the position as the shipping point until 1871. . . . The Chisholm trail was the main route between the Red River at the Texas border and Abilene which was the northern terminus of that trail. The trail crossed the Arkansas River near Wichita (Kansas) and the town of Newton northerly from Wichita was built on the trail. . . . Mr. Henry is correct when he states that the old Chisholm trail was the direct route between the Red River on the Texas border and Abilene, Kansas. South of the Red River various routes were used northerly from the Gulf of Mexico and the Rio Grande, the route depending upon the starting point in Texas, but all headed for a central or common crossing across the Red River which was the southern terminus of the Chisholm trail. . . . From the Red River to Kansas the Chisholm trail traversed the Indian Nation, now the State of Oklahoma . . . there never was a route as popular, as prominent or as well known and over which more cattle were driven than the old Chisholm trail with Abilene as its northern terminus.

We have set forth this in Chapter III. For Webb to have misguided readers about this, a topic at his door, vitiates his assurance about matters farther away from his home, especially since he pays little heed to dates.

Another instance in his case concerns Will Bill. Webb first assumed that Wild Bill was marshal of Abilene in 1867 because "North of 36" so "featured" him. Soon finding this untenable, Webb glossed it over by: "Of course Abilene had no marshal in '67. At that time Wild Bill was marshal of Hays City." At the time of Hough's story there was no Hays City and Wild Bill did not

become marshal there until 1869 as its records attest. Webb continues: "It is only the careless reader who gets the idea (from 'North of 36') that Wild Bill was marshal of Abilene. . . . Hough always speaks of him as the 'future town marshal of Abilene.'" Webb takes pains to cite pages in corroboration. But he seems to have been careful to omit the page (364) where Hough specifically but erroneously states:

> Besides, he (McCoy) was mayor of the town. "Bill," said he, accosting Hickok, "I got you here now, and I'm going to have you elected town marshal. We can't hold any election right now, and we may need a town marshal right soon. I appoint you marshal right now, and Mr. McMasters as your deputy.

Webb approved of Hough's picture of Abilene citizens and Texans observing together the Fourth of July as if that were true of the time and place. He emphasized how loyal to the Stars and Stripes Texans are and had been before the Civil War. This was not the question. He did not confess to unadvised persons that the Texans had for four years been shooting at Old Glory and that their anger remained hot on the Plains. He wrote: "Texans have always celebrated the Fourth of July." They did not do so in Abilene. The people there for obvious and sufficient reasons, as explained, avoided the Texans patriotically as well as socially.

Webb indulged in a long program of a similar sort to sponsor the admitted historical aberration "North of 36" with its libelous contents.

Another enthusiastic Texan was George W. Saunders, announced as President of "The Old Time Trail Drivers' Association" of Texas and as having "rounded up a whole symposium of living testimony to show that Emerson Hough knew what he was writing about in 'North of 36.'" All old-time cattle Texas, in convention assembled and otherwise, was reported as savagely up in arms in bearing witness that the author had "depicted them and their life truthfully . . . as a careful historical novelist." In celebration of Texan disgrace!

Like Webb, Saunders only appeared sensitive about statements limiting the beauty of those Texans, not about their immorality italicized by Hough. In excited exertions to lead the misled and unable to see himself as others would, Saunders took the ridiculous trouble to help advertise an author who had painted his Texan cowboy kind in colors of shame. His personal knowledge about the exact topic was nil as might be expected of a lad of thirteen living in Texas in 1867. He gives the closing of the Texas Cattle Trade in Abilene in "1874 or 5" for 1871. He furnished material for *The Literary Digest International Book Review* to indicate that A. W. Billingsly's crossing the Arkansas with a herd in 1884 substantiated Hough as to 1867 in Abilene. And in this connection was quoted Little's gossip as to town life in the 70's as if bearing on camp and "schooner" life in the 60's, while Saunders kept back what Little said at the same time, as quoted above, in contradiction of Hough's historical accuracy.

Saunders reported himself as having been in Abilene in 1871—a youth of seventeen. It is to be hoped he was an exception there to Texan cowboys whom Hough depicted in wickedness. An old stockman, he needed more range than the restricted "North of 36" afforded and, breaking over the obstruction of dates, roamed in his digressions over all that West in all its decades. He had no word to erase the stain which Hough put upon McCoy, the main man in bringing cattle Texas out of its slough and bankrupt condition. Instead of recognizing or appreciating such Northerners, who laid out the vital part of the Trail and who furnished the market and the cash, Saunders seems to give all the credit to Texans as represented by himself.

The one important protagonist of "North of 36" proved to be *The Saturday Evening Post* which first published the tale, without examination of its historical presentation. Unaware that Rhodes had confessed it was "easy to see" the story, with its "serious discrepancies," was more or less a product of a sick mind, the *Post* felt called upon to stand up for the book's supreme reliability. In a leading editorial, June 7, 1924, it impressed on its public four points:

1. The idea of my being a sort of Frenchman. France and the French were at the time unpopular in America and this would discredit me. The precise way the *Post* took was to mention only the French titles of my published books. From what it must have known in "Who's Who," it did not confide to readers that I had been born

in New York State, was a graduate of the University of Kansas of the year 1881, had, therefore, lived in Kansas in the 70's and perhaps in the 60's, and could be presumably credited with a better knowledge of those days than the later Hough, an outsider. Accordingly, instead of being respected as one of those pioneers for whom the *Post* affected such a high regard, I became denounced as a kind of Frenchman for pretending to know about life on the Plains and in Abilene, Kansas, in the 60's and 70's.

2. Praising Hough for being "such a loving and faithful historian of our old frontier and of the sturdy pioneers"; for "what extraordinary pains he always took to embody authentic history in his romances"; for "his fascinating and veracious records of our national past"; and because "no American writer has ever loved his own land more deeply or has been more profoundly inspired by pride in her old virile stock." We have seen how Hough disgracefully showed off Kansas Pioneers.

3. The *Post's* overwhelming esteem for those old frontiersmen, an esteem not so devout, however, as to deter it from publishing an author who gave a bad portrayal of McCoy. It did not refer to its own published "highly unflattering picture" of the Texans themselves.

4. The *Post's* authority, not from accredited materials in public libraries, but only from miscellaneous Texans. The Texans it names supplied a foundation of quicksand. We have spoken of Webb, and also of Saunders, the latter "perhaps Mr. Hough's star witness" about

Kansas. The *Post*: "Mr. Saunders . . . was driving cattle during the very years covered in 'North of 36.' He wrote a book about his experiences." At that time, 1867, Saunders, as shown, was a boy of thirteen living in Texas. He had not written such a book.

An unknown William Atkinson is cited by the *Post*. He does not appear of consequence enough to have been included in "The Trail Drivers of Texas." He introduced to the Texas public Mrs. Burks as "a living refutation of Henry's declaration that no Texas women ever went to Kansas with a cattle drive." Of course, no such statement, to repeat, was made. She wrote that she did not go on such a trip until the early 70's to a place in Kansas she calls "Ellsmore," which never then existed. She "got froze out" and went back home by rail. Another Texan source is given by the *Post:* J. R. Blocker, who seems to have first gone up the Trail in 1873. He is so little familiar with the subject that he located Abilene on the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fé Railroad which was not built out on the Plains in the 60's.

These persons made up the *Post's* case. I invited it to examine with me historical materials in the New York Public Library. I asked the *Post* to express regret to the McCoy family for having published Hough's stuff about its valuable progenitor. The requests were ignored. Its plan here of accepting historical accounts on the reputation of an author as a fictionist, while convenient, opened the way for imposition by such as Hough and Rhodes with their idea that wild-west fiction owed no responsi-

bility to history nor to historical characters; that the spurious was as good as the genuine for their purposes.

Adventure, a magazine of light stories, spread out its columns to all and sundry for some months on the topic of "North of 36" as history. Among the Texans, wild-west fictionists and moving picture folk who joined in this promiscuous clamor, and led the reader to think they knew more about my Kansas town than I knew, not one had been in Abilene in the 60's nor was a resident of Kansas in early days. Many had not been born then nor ever dwelt west of the Mississippi, north of the Red River. One had not lived west of Maine. None heeded the fact that the book only related to 1867.

The only letter of historic value here came from Wm. M. Brewer (Nov. 10 1924), a stranger to me. He lived in Abilene from 1870 on. He supported my critique, showing Hough in error in the main contentions. Brewer stated that no such town as Hough's Abilene existed in '67; that no Fourth of July was or would have been observed there by or with Texans; that Wild Bill did not become marshal then; that it was "certainly far-fetched" to present a woman heading a herd to Abilene; that the drove was too large to be typical, since the average ran from 1000 to 1500 head. Richard Withers in "The Trail Drivers of Texas" (vol. 1, p. 261): "In those days (1870) 1000 head was considered a large herd." McCoy and Edwards agreed with me, too, on this additional point.

G. E. Bailey, Ph.D., of the Department of Geology,

University of Southern California, also a stranger to me, wrote in *Adventure* (Oct. 30, 1924) in general confirmation of my statements. He had been a trapper and buffalo hunter on the Plains in '67 and emphasized:

> . . . let me say Stuart Henry is right in all of his criticisms. I knew and admired Emerson Hough for he was a real he-man, a fine adventurer and a pleasing writer of fiction. He seems to have been misled by the mirage of romance, seeing things of beauty where only a few squalid mud huts really existed.

Such was the campaign to legitimatize before the public and historians historical misrepresentations in the form of "North of 36." The record would hardly be complete without the following affidavit of J. B. Edwards, the only man who lived in Abilene during part of its Texas days and for years collected data concerning it. As will be observed, he supports me entirely.

> STATE OF KANSAS, } ss.:
> COUNTY OF DICKINSON. }
>
> J. B. EDWARDS, being duly sworn, deposes and says:
>
> THAT I am eighty years of age and have been continuously a resident of Abilene, Kansas, since the month of May, 1870, where I arrived when twenty-six years of age.
>
> THAT I was for nine sessions, ending in 1923, Engrossing and Enrolling Clerk of the House of Representatives in Kansas, and was for many years a business man in various lines of business in the city of Abilene, Kansas.
>
> THAT I knew intimately Joseph G. McCoy and T. C. Henry during their life time, and also Stuart Henry who was a brother of T. C. Henry, all of said persons being among the earliest persons in the town (1867-8).

THAT T. C. Henry was the first mayor of Abilene (1869 to 1871) and James B. Hickok was not marshal until 1871.

THAT I was also acquainted with the other townspeople of the city as well as very many of the Texas cattlemen who came each season during the Texas Cattle Trade here until 1872, and I was familiar with the town life and activities.

THAT it has been a hobby of mine for many years to collect and preserve data on the early history of Abilene; and that I have all such data now to hand down to posterity; that I have from time to time written for the press many articles on the subject and am often called upon for information.

THAT I have read the story by Emerson Hough entitled "North of 36" and I note especially the latter part where it is said to deal authentically with Abilene and its life on or before the date stated in said book as July 4, 1867; and that while I regard said story as a good piece of fiction of its kind I find such presentation not in accord with historical facts as I have learned to know them personally or from my original data or from those residents in Abilene before my arrival.

THAT some of the historical errors in said book can be pointed out as follows:

Joseph G. McCoy, contrary to the representation in "North of 36" where he appears as McCoyne, was not mayor of Abilene until 1871, was not a drinking man as indicated on page 331 nor owner of a saloon or any interest in a saloon (331), nor did I ever hear him use oaths as indicated on page 342. He was a high-minded, upright citizen.

Hickok was not a sojourner in Abilene until May or June, 1871; and, having been intimately acquainted with him, I have good reason to believe that, also contrary to the representation in "North of 36," he was not then or ever had been married, his sexual life being irregular according to the mode of life quite common among the law-

less frontier characters who frequented towns on those borders of civilization.

Contrary to the representation on page 316 of "North of 36," the scene of Wild Bill's fight with the Dave McCanles gang, instead of being east of Abilene, Kansas, was at Rock Creek, Nebraska, a stage station on the old Ben Holliday stage route from St. Joseph, Mo., to California: this station being a few miles southeast of Fairbury, in Jefferson County, Nebraska, near the Kansas-Nebraska line; that the date of the fight, instead of being in 1860, as given in said book, was on July 12, 1861; that, instead of then killing nine men as stated, Wild Bill killed only three men —Dave McCanles, James Woods and James Gordon.

Contrary to the representations in "North of 36," Drovers' Cottage at Abilene was not erected or even begun at the time set forth: it was not available for occupancy until the Spring of 1868.

No part of the stockyards in Abilene was completed or available for use in July, 1867, as indicated on page 322 and elsewhere, nor were there any wooden buildings except ten or twelve log cabins, nearly all covered with dirt for roofs, the intersections between the logs being filled in with dirt mixed with water—mud.

There were then, contrary to the information set forth in "North of 36," no barber shops, no livery stable as such, no dance halls (332) nor more than two saloons, these being in log cabins.

Contrary to the indications in "North of 36," Abilene had no civic organization nor a mayor until September 3, 1869, and no town brass band (331) until about 1872 nor were its performers ever "rum soaked" (391) but were good sober citizens.

Abilene did not have eight saloons and five gambling "palaces" nor a population fitting in with such conditions in 1867 (305).

There were no collections of prostitutes nor any prostitutes there then (390).

On July 4, 1867, there could not have been any such gathering of people as mentioned on pages 331, 339.

Colonel J. W. Gore and his wife Lou, both of whom I knew well, did not arrive in Abilene until early in the summer of 1868 to become managers of Drovers' Cottage.

Contrary to the indication in "North of 36," the first cattle shipped from Abilene was in September, 1867.

The representations in the book about a herd of three thousand cattle as first reaching Abilene is not in accord with the general facts, since from one thousand to fifteen hundred head was during that season and for some time afterward the average number in a herd.

Contrary to story of "North of 36," no woman I ever knew or heard of came over the Trail to Abilene, Kansas, as the owner of a herd of cattle. Very few wives of Texas cattlemen came to Abilene during its five years of the Texas Cattle Trade, most of those ladies arriving by steamboat via New Orleans and the Mississippi River to St. Louis and thence by rail to Abilene.

The general picture of the town in June-July 1867, as given in "North of 36," is historically inaccurate and misleading according to my knowledge and belief from the facts I have verified from friends and others who should know whereof they speak.

I further testify:

THAT I have read Stuart Henry's article in *The Literary Digest International Book Review* in criticism of "North of 36" as a historical presentation, and from my personal knowledge and investigations know his article to be correct except in one or two insignificant details.

THAT I have also read the editorial of June 7, 1924, in *The Saturday Evening Post* entitled "Texas Versus Henry" where it maintains that Emerson Hough is right and Stuart Henry wrong about all the historical matter set forth in "North of 36." And I hereby affirm that Emerson Hough was not faithful to history about early Abilene, Kansas, and about its historic characters, but that Stuart Henry's

comments as to that history and his descriptions of certain pioneers of those days are correct and truthful, and that there was much flagrant lawlessness and criminal vice in Abilene, during the days of its Texas Cattle Trade, on the part of the Texas cowboy men (not, however, all of them), as prominently shown in "North of 36" itself, and published in *The Saturday Evening Post.*

J. B. EDWARDS.

Subscribed and sworn to this
5th day of November, 1924.
J. A. Graves,
NOTARY PUBLIC.
My Commission Expires January 11, 1928.

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